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MARTIN BUBER: A STUDY OF THE I-THOU RELATION  
AND ITS RELEVANCE FOR THE PASTORAL COUNSELOR

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of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Religion

by  
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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	v
The Problem . . . . .	v
Limitations . . . . .	vi
Organization of the Paper . . . . .	vi
 Chapter	
I. A THEOLOGY NOT FULLY APPROPRIATED . . . . .	1
Dialogical Relation . . . . .	2
Misunderstood and Misappropriated . . . . .	4
Impact of Contemporary Scene . . . . .	10
Not Systematic . . . . .	11
Foundation for Counseling . . . . .	14
II. IN SEARCH OF DIALOGUE . . . . .	16
The Problem of Subjectivity . . . . .	17
Hints of a Life of Dialogue . . . . .	19
Major Influences on the Early Buber . . . . .	21
Hasidism . . . . .	21
Existentialism . . . . .	25
III. ON THE THRESHOLD OF A VISION . . . . .	31
The Elusive Daniel . . . . .	31
Anticipation of I-Thou Philosophy . . . . .	33
Realization to Dialogue . . . . .	35
Threshold of I-Thou . . . . .	37

Chapter	Page
IV. BUBER'S MAGNUS OPUS-- <u>I-THOU</u> . . . . .	38
Personal Encounters with I-Thou . . . . .	43
The Problems of Mutuality and Judgment . . . . .	49
V. LIVING IN RELATION . . . . .	54
The Relation . . . . .	54
Personhood . . . . .	56
Becoming Whole . . . . .	58
The Healing Relation . . . . .	60
Dialogue with God . . . . .	64
The Problem of Buber's God . . . . .	66
Connecting with Others . . . . .	68
VI. "YOU YOURSELF MUST BEGIN" . . . . .	71
Illumination of the Work of Pastoral Theolo- gians . . . . .	71
Basis for Pastoral Counseling--Kimper and Howe . . . . .	75
Guidelines for Enabling the I-Thou Relation . . . . .	78
Beginning with Oneself . . . . .	86
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	90
Primary Sources--by Buber . . . . .	90
Works about Buber . . . . .	94
Secondary Sources . . . . .	97
Buber and Counseling . . . . .	99

## INTRODUCTION

Over the past few decades, the Christian church has witnessed the dynamic growth of pastoral counseling. The perplexity of life in the twentieth century has called forth the need for pastoral care and counseling, which is basically the need for human care and affirmation, symbolizing the caring and love of God. Pastoral care is on the growing edge of the ministry in the seventies. Without a firm theological basis, however, a person-centered pastoral care ministry might be jeopardized. Consequently, every pastoral counselor should deal seriously with the theological basis of his counseling.

I feel that a study of the writings of Martin Buber is helpful to the pastoral counselor who is concerned about a theological basis for the counseling relationship.

## THE PROBLEM

It is the purpose of this study to examine various misconceptions of Buber's I-Thou relation, to trace the development of the I-Thou philosophy, and to illustrate the relation between pastoral care and the I-Thou philosophy. It is not my intention to offer specific instructions regarding various techniques for the counselor, but rather to explain the I-Thou relation as a significant basis for counseling. Two pastoral counselors are cited as having

formulated their counseling on the basis of Buber's theology. Guidelines are also given to illustrate the conditions necessary for the occurrence of the I-Thou relation.

### LIMITATIONS

I am limiting this study of the theology of Martin Buber to his philosophy of the I-Thou relation and its relationship to the theology of pastoral care. This requires a study of the dialogical relation as it developed in the early works of the Jewish scholar. Areas of the author's work which are informative to the I-Thou relation will be covered as well. Techniques of counseling and small group work will not be covered, but examples will be used to illustrate the relationship between pastoral care and Buber's theology.

### ORGANIZATION OF THE PAPER

In the first chapter of this work, I have pointed out certain distortions of the work of Buber. I have selected the distortions which are related to his theory of relations.

In the second chapter, I have sketched the growth and development of Martin Buber as he strived to give birth to the dialogical relation. The influence of Hasidism and the impact of the existentialists are noted because they

directly influenced the birth and growth of the philosophy of dialogue.

The third chapter reviews Daniel, the transitional work between a philosophy of realization and a philosophy of dialogue. Buber was struggling with a vision that was to manifest itself in I and Thou.

Chapter four deals primarily with quotations from I-Thou. These quotations are the basis of Buber's explanation of the I-Thou relation. I also share a personal I-Thou experience, and the I-Thou and I-It modes of relating are pointed out as being central to the work of the hebraic thinker.

Chapter five shares with the reader the contention of this writer that dialogue with Martin Buber holds an immeasurable potential for the pastoral counselor. Some of the common misconceptions about the I-Thou relation are explained, and the reader is encouraged to live in relation.

The final chapter opens with examples of the ways in which an understanding of Buber assists in the study of pastoral theology. Kimper and Howe are pointed out as being two counselors who cite Buber as their theological foundation. Finally, personal examples and guidelines for establishing the I-Thou relation are shared with the reader, who is encouraged to live in relation.

The weaknesses and problems of Buber as related to

the pastoral theologian are shared throughout the paper in the appropriate sections.

I have included an annotated bibliography on the writings of Buber and on a number of resources entirely or in part on Buber which I used in the preparation of this paper. The annotated bibliography is included to assist the reader who is interested in pursuing primary or secondary sources on Martin Buber.



## CHAPTER I

## A THEOLOGY NOT FULLY APPROPRIATED

The theology of Martin Buber is an important source for the pastoral counselor. Buber's theology revolved around his theory of living in relation with the world and with God. Since the nature of relations is such a vital part of counseling, the pastoral counselor should take the theology of Buber under serious consideration.

I have discovered evidence, however, that Buber's insight in the phenomena of religion has not been fully realized in the field of counseling as a whole. For example, some scholars in the field of psychotherapy, such as Carl Rogers, and some practitioners in the field of pastoral counseling, such as Howard Clinebell, have made only passing references to the insights that are available in the vast compendium of works by Buber. It is not enough, however, to simply point out that few have fully appropriated or appreciated the word that Buber gave for those who seek to heal broken relationships. I have also discovered evidence that the passing references to Buber are often shallow at best, and in some cases even distorted.

In my research, I have found that most of the counseling references to Buber are in the context of his creative explanation of the I-Thou relation. These

references are considered shallow in that a majority of cases they seem to be used to substantiate a preconceived notion rather than to shed light on a subject.

This study deals principally with the primary resources from Buber. I have also seriously considered the scholars who are the most reputable in their interpretation and study of Buber, such as Jacob Agus, Arthur Cohen, Malcolm Diamond, Maurice Friedman, Will Herberg, and Jacob Trapp. Other less known students of Buber will also be drawn upon. I must point out, however, that although the secondary resources have been helpful, I have discovered that there is no substitute for a direct encounter with Buber's work. Someone seeking a better understanding of Buber once asked Maurice Friedman if he would give a definition of Buber's existentialism. I can affirm Friedman's reply. "Would it not be better if I told you something directly about Buber instead of offering you a general category from which you deduce something about him?" Friedman added, incidently, "And I have given you a definition of existentialism in what I have just said."<sup>1</sup>

#### DIALOGICAL RELATION

I will also share with the reader discoveries I

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<sup>1</sup>Maurice Friedman (ed.) The Worlds of Existentialism (New York: Random House, 1964), p. 4.

have made regarding the dialogical relation, which is the center about which all of Buber's theology revolved. As I will point out in the course of the paper, these insights can serve as a theological basis for the pastoral counselor, or at least assist the counselor in formulating his theology of pastoral care.

Carl Rogers, for example, commented on Buber's dialogical relation in a face to face meeting in 1957. Rogers summarized Buber's concept of the real meeting relationship. After hearing Roger's summary of his dialogical relation, Buber stated, "You call something dialogical that I cannot call so."<sup>2</sup> More was involved in this comment than a simple disagreement. According to Buber, Rogers did not fully understand Buber's conception of the dialogical relation. It appears, therefore, on the basis of this observation and misunderstandings that I will share with the reader that the depth of the I-Thou relation has been misunderstood. It strikes this researcher that too many have drawn on Buber to support their own contentions, or have taken his work out of context to suit their own ends. As a result, Buber's I-Thou has not made the impact it might have. In regard to this point,

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<sup>2</sup>"Dialogue Between Martin Buber and Carl Rogers," in *ibid.*, p. 492.

J. H. Oldham commented upon the epoch-making I and Thou two decades after its immediate impact in 1923, "I question whether any book has been published in the present century the message of which, if it were understood, would have such far-reaching consequences for the life of our time."<sup>3</sup>

#### MISUNDERSTOOD AND MISAPPROPRIATED

As stated above, the researcher has also uncovered evidence that in addition to those who have not fully understood Buber, there also seems to be many who have encountered Buber and misunderstood or misinterpreted his message. Buber scholars have substantiated this observation. Malcolm Diamond, who has authored an intensively accurate interpretation of the thought of Buber, as substantiated by Buber himself, prefaced his scholarly work with this observation:

The broad dissemination of Buber's outlook represents a gain for our culture, but it leads to misinterpretations of his thought. Some readers may be misled by secular thinkers who use Buber's insights while ignoring their religious matrix. Other readers may be misled by Christian commentators who overlook the distinctively Jewish character of that religious matrix.<sup>4</sup>

As a Christian, therefore, I must come to terms

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<sup>3</sup>J. H. Oldham, Real Life Is Meeting (London: Sheldon Press, 1942), p. 28.

<sup>4</sup>Malcolm Diamond, Martin Buber, Jewish Existentialist (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. vii.

with the fact that Buber was indeed a Jewish scholar. Although one can study this Jewish theologian in depth and feel confident that he has acquainted himself with his theology, one must also recognize one's limitations if one is not fully cognizant of the history of Jewish theology. Consequently, this also presents a problem for the Christian pastoral counselor. I have attempted to deal with this problem by reviewing Jewish influences upon Buber such as Hasidism, and also by reviewing certain aspects of the theology of Judaism. The reader, however, must bear this limitation in mind as he reads this paper.

Another Buber scholar, Maurice Friedman, has affirmed the difficulty in attempting to fully appreciate and appropriate the work of Buber. Maurice Friedman authored a major work on the scholar under study entitled Martin Buber. The Life of Dialogue. (Buber himself, incidentally, indicated that this particular systematization of his thought was without comparison.) "On a rather multifarious work Dr. Friedman has not imposed an artificial unity; he has disclosed the hidden one."<sup>5</sup> Friedman commented in his introductory chapter on the paradoxical unity of I-It and I-Thou, which are too often understood as

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<sup>5</sup>Maurice Friedman, Martin Buber, The Life of Dialogue (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960) Back cover of paperback edition.

alternative ways of relating:

In the light of this quality of Buber's thought, it is not surprising that many find his works difficult to understand. Most of us approach a book expecting little other than an extension and application of concepts through what he has written in his books or through any sum of his sayings.<sup>6</sup>

Friedman's observation is substantiated if one researches the various references made about Buber's I-Thou and I-It relations, even among reputable Jewish scholars. For example, Jewish theologian Eugene Borowitz, author of A New Jewish Theology in the Making, missed the unity found between the I-It and the I-Thou. Borowitz raised the "interesting problem in Buber's universal thought (in the) unmentioned relationship between the realms of I-It and I-Thou. What unites them? What gives them their common ground? What makes it possible for man to live in both of them?"<sup>7</sup>

It is my contention that Buber was most helpful to the pastoral counselor in his description of the way in which beings relate. Buber's own translator of his most definitive statement of the dialogical relationship, I and Thou, Ronald Gregor Smith, misunderstood the expansiveness of I-Thou. As Wodehouse has pointed out, Ronald Smith

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., pp. 5-6.

<sup>7</sup>Eugene Borowitz, A New Jewish Theology in the Making (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1968), p. 140.

repeatedly used words such as "Personal" or "persons" when referring to the relation, an inclusiveness that Buber would not allow.<sup>8</sup> As will be demonstrated in the course of this examination of Buber, the I-Thou relation is not limited to persons, but includes things as well.

Furthermore, theological giants such as Karl Barth and Emil Brunner seem to have misused the I-Thou relation as a conceptual tool. Two dissertations on this very matter have largely gone unnoticed, namely the works of H. Paul Santmire writing at Harvard, and Bryan Fair in a work accepted by the University of London.<sup>9</sup> In Fair's work entitled "Martin Buber and Some Theologians of 'Encounter,'" it is extensively documented that many theologians entertain certain misinterpretations of the central theme in Buber. Emil Brunner, for example, in The Divine-Human Encounter, assumes that the historical and the personal is related one to one with the I-Thou, and that the I-It is synonymous with the impersonal.<sup>10</sup> Another theologian,

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<sup>8</sup>Helen Wodehouse, "Martin Buber's 'I and Thou,'" Philosophy, XX (March 1968), 17.

<sup>9</sup>H. Paul Santmire, "I-Thou, I-It, and I-Ens," Journal of Religion, XLVIII:3 (July 1968), 260-273; see also Bryan J. Fair, "Martin Buber and Some Theologians of 'Encounter,'" Scottish Journal of Theology, XXI:1 (March 1968), 27-36.

<sup>10</sup>Emil Brunner, The Divine-Human Encounter, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1943), p. 32.

Farmer, author of Towards Belief in God and The World and God, labored under the same misconception that the personal is to be associated with the I-Thou and the impersonal with the I-It.<sup>11</sup> John Baillie, on the other hand, assumes incorrectly in Our Knowledge of God that one can align the subject-object relation with the I-It and the subject-subject with the I-Thou.<sup>12</sup> As I will attempt to show, the sphere of the I-Thou relation dramatically encompasses everyone and everything.

H. Paul Santmire confirms this observation in his work presented to Harvard University.

As it is generally depicted, the I-Thou relation lacks the comprehensiveness it has in Buber's writings. Buber envisions the I-Thou relation as including certain relationships to the physical-vital world of nature.

Contrast this to Karl Barth's assertion that the only place in the cosmos where we no longer say It and I, but Thou, is before the human countenance. Barth is representative of a number of thinkers here, in particularly Brunner and Gogarten. They also view the I-Thou relation as existing only between two persons. With Barth, they have either neglected or overlooked the breadth of Buber's picture of the I-Thou relation.<sup>13</sup>

As an example, the passage in Barth to which

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<sup>11</sup>H. H. Farmer, The World and God (London: Nisbet, 1935), p. 20.

<sup>12</sup>John Baillie, Our Knowledge of God (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1965), p. 217f.

<sup>13</sup>Santmire, op. cit., p. 260.



Santmire was referring is found in Church Dogmatics:

The place in the cosmos in which objectivity is announced to us, in which we can no longer say it, and therefore no longer I, but only Thou, and in which we alone can ultimately recognize ourselves in this particular way, is the human countenance.<sup>14</sup>

The perceptive Reinhold Niebuhr has also pointed out the way in which the theory of relations has been misused in yet another sense:

While Buber's influence in the Christian community was great, it was certainly ironic that many Christian theologians appropriated his concern for the interpersonal relations to validate Luther's concept of a "heavenly kingdom" of purely sacrificial or self-giving love that prevailed among persons. The appropriation has limited validity; but it was in strange contrast to Buber's passion for prophetic justice.<sup>15</sup>

As I will illustrate in this study of Buber, one cannot limit the I-Thou relation to the personal, nor can one implicitly or explicitly draw upon the Jewish thinker to confirm some I-Thou theory or relationship that is less inclusive than intended. One must recognize the difficulty in dealing with the all-inclusiveness of the theory, but anything less than such an attempt would be misleading. The problematic nature of the all-inclusiveness was recognized by the theorist himself in I and Thou, "If the I-Thou relationship requires a mutual action which in fact

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>Reinhold Niebuhr, "Martin Buber: in Memoriam," Saturday Review, XLVIII:30 (July 24, 1965), 37.

embraces both the I and the Thou, how can the relation to something in nature be understood as such a relationship?"<sup>16</sup> This question, incidently, as will be pointed out in chapter four, is never answered adequately by Buber.

#### IMPACT ON CONTEMPORARY SCENE

After having recognized the difficulty of fully understanding the comprehensiveness of the hebraic scholar, one must also recognize his tremendous impact upon the contemporary scene. In spite of the problems mentioned above, the power and relevance of the profound religious philosopher have not gone unrecognized in any quarter. His ever increasing influence is being felt in theology, philosophy, and psychology. For this very reason, the obvious fact that Buber is read and quoted with avidity, is all the more reason that the prophetic force should be better understood. This writer feels very strongly that Buber can be even more of a prophetic voice for the theologian, and especially for the pastoral theologian, if his theory of relation is more closely examined.

In the case of pastoral counseling, I feel that it is imperative that we listen closely to Buber. It is incumbent upon all who wish to utilize the insights of Buber

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<sup>16</sup>Martin Buber, I and Thou (New York: Charles Schribner's Sons, 1958), p. 125.

to step far beyond a simple knowledge of his theories, perhaps gleaned second hand, to a direct encounter with his work. For this reason, I feel it necessary to include a number of direct quotations from Buber throughout this paper. It is the conviction of this writer that only through direct contact with Buber can one fully appreciate and appropriate his insights for pastoral counselors.

#### NOT SYSTEMATIC

As mentioned earlier, a student of Buber is also limited in that Buber was not a systematic theologian. He had no fixed doctrine. Nonetheless, this should not discourage the student. Buber himself declared that he had no fixed doctrine in the forward to his only novel, For the Sake of Heaven:

My function is to point out realities of this order. He who expects of me a teaching other than a pointing out of this character, will always be disillusioned. And it would seem to me, indeed, that in this hour of history, the crucial thing is not to possess a fixed doctrine, but rather to recognize the reality of the present.<sup>17</sup>

In a later, more theological work, Buber echoed these same feelings about the secondary importance of dogmatics:

But dogma remains of secondary importance. In the religious life of Judaism, primary importance is not given to dogma, but to the remembrance and the

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<sup>17</sup>Martin Buber, For the Sake of Heaven (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1953), p. xiii.

expectation of a concrete situation: The encounter of God and men. Dogma can only arise in a situation where detachment is the prevailing attitude to the concrete, lived moment--a state of detachment which easily becomes misunderstood in dogmatics as being superior to the lived moment itself. Whatever is enunciated in abstracto is in the third person about the divine, on the thither side of the confrontation of I and Thou, is only a projection onto the conceptual construct plane which, through indispensable proves itself again and again to be unessential.<sup>18</sup>

It would seem moreover, that the difficulty of not being able to work with a fixed doctrine actually results in a blessing to the serious student, who soon discovers that Buber attempted to point the way for each person in his struggle to understand the meaning of relation. As I will demonstrate following an examination of the development of Buber's theology, Buber has pointed the way for me to a meaningful integration between the scholarship of an existential theologian and the practice of pastoral counseling.

Before examining the existentialism that gave birth to the concept of dialogue, one further observation seems necessary to put my observations in the proper perspective. To say that the Jewish sage has often been misunderstood, or to suggest that he has not been fully appreciated by the pastoral counselors, is not to lessen the impact that Buber has exerted on many disciplines, particularly on the twentieth century theologians. It is widely recognized that

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<sup>18</sup>Martin Buber, Israel and the World (New York: Schocken Books, 1948), p. 14.

Buber's influence has been explicit in a number of religious thinkers, and at least implicit in untold others.

H. Richard Niebuhr was one who recognized the immeasurable impact of the philosopher-theologian:

More than any other person in the modern world, more even than Kierkegaard, Martin Buber has been for me, and for many of my companions, the prophet of the soul and the witness to that truth which is required of the soul not as solitary, but as companionable being.<sup>19</sup>

Reinhold Niebuhr, who once referred to Buber as "one of the genuine wise men of our generation,"<sup>20</sup> spoke reverently about him in a memorial statement:

Martin Buber died on June 14th (1965) in the city of Jerusalem at the age of eighty-seven. His death ended the life of one of the most creative spirits of our age. His thought and life influenced the most diverse cultural disciplines and religious traditions, both Jewish and Christian.

His magnus-opus, I and Thou, was an exposition of social existentialism and influenced many continental psychiatrists. The thesis of the volume was superior to the existentialism from Kierkegaard to Sartre because of its emphasis on the social character of the human selfhood. No one can fulfill the self without acknowledging other selves in their independent selfhoods.<sup>21</sup>

Finally, if there remains any doubt in anyone's mind as to the catalytic power of the seminal thinker under consideration, Maurice Friedman, Buber's beloved and

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<sup>19</sup>"He Made the Universal Transparent," Christian Century, LXXXII:25 (June 23, 1965), 796.

<sup>20</sup>William Robert Miller, "A Personalistic Philosophy of Hope," Saturday Review, LI:6 (February 10, 1968), 33.

<sup>21</sup>Niebuhr, op. cit., p. 37.

insightful and understanding disciple, suggests that we review the range of influence. In 1955, Friedman made the following observation:

Martin Buber's influence on religious thought has steadily grown and spread for more than three generations and has been equally great among Christian thinkers as among Jews. Among the prominent Christian religious thinkers whom Buber has significantly influenced are John Baillie, Karl Barth, Nicholas Berdyaev, Emil Brunner, Father M. C. D'Arcy, Herbert H. Farmer, J. E. Fison, Friedrich Gogarten, Karl Heim, Reuel Howe, Hermann von Keyserling, Ernst Michel, Reinhold Niebuhr, H. Richard Niebuhr, J. H. Oldham, Theodore Steinbuchel, and Paul Tillich.<sup>22</sup>

#### FOUNDATION FOR COUNSELING

Although this writer recognizes that Buber's influence can be well documented in any of the above mentioned thinkers, it is not the purpose of this paper to do such a thing. My primary concern is an examination of Buber in such a way that the reader will be able to sense a firm foundation in Buber for pastoral counseling, and will not thereafter be influenced by certain misconceptions as shown earlier. It is my conviction that the pastoral counselor can benefit at least as much, if not more, than the psychiatrists of whom Niebuhr has spoken. I wish to emphasize, however, that no amount of reading about Buber will give the interested student a solid understanding of Buber.

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<sup>22</sup>Friedman, Martin Buber, The Life of Dialogue, p. 268.

I also share with the reader that there have been those who have caught more than a glimpse of the potential impact for the pastoral counselor. Some pastoral theologians, such as Reuel Howe and Frank Kimper, have sensed this potential and their insights will be shared in the course of this paper. Others, as alluded to above, have only been near the cutting edge of Buber. It is my hope that the following pages, which contain insights grown out of direct contact with the primary source, as well as insights from many Buber scholars, will point the reader to Buber.

## CHAPTER II

## IN SEARCH OF DIALOGUE

Although a study of Buber might well begin with one or two readings of the renown I and Thou, as many studies do, the writer feels that it is far better to struggle with Buber in his labor pains to bring forth his conception of the dialogical relationship. Malcolm Diamond, author of Martin Buber. Jewish Existentialist, stated that "what Buber means by the I-Thou encounter cannot be explained, it can only be indicated."<sup>1</sup> As pointed out in what Buber scholars consider to be the first significant work to appear on Buber in English, Jacob Agus' Modern Philosophies of Judaism, we are encouraged to look for the echo of Buber's words in our own life:

When we ask wherein the uniqueness of the "I-Thou" relation is manifested, we enter the most delicate field of our investigation. The author obviously appeals to us to find an echo to his words in our own life. The power of analysis and of discernment of special characteristics belongs to the scientific attitude. The moment we propose to study two beings that stand in the "I-Thou" relation to each other, we bring them down to our world of "It." It follows that the description of the "Thou" attitude must be subjective. We must at the very outset agree to take Buber's description of what he felt when "addressing his 'Thou'" as a fact of experience, though, of course, we shall

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<sup>1</sup>Malcolm Diamond, Martin Buber. Jewish Existentialist (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 23.



have to examine critically his deductions from that fact.<sup>2</sup>

### THE PROBLEM OF SUBJECTIVITY

Therefore, the reader must recognize from the outset that a study of Buber is problematic for the very reason that we must look to an "echo in our own life" and due to the fact that Buber's observations are all subjective. As Diamond has pointed out, "His illustrations provide the only reliable guide to the meaning."<sup>3</sup> Consequently, it will be necessary to share with the reader a number of illustrations direct from Buber. The next step for the reader is to attempt to correlate Buber's experience with his own experience. This subjective approach lacks intellectual strictness and philosophical objectivity. Arthur Cohen has commented on Buber's lack of objective, systematic doctrine.

Buber's intention is essentially moral and prophetic. A theory of knowledge, a philosophy of history, a doctrine of interpersonal relations, a sociology, a politics, an ideology, have all been founded upon Buber's primary intuition. But such theories, however valuable and convincing, transfer insight from the field of action to the normative kingdom of theory. Buber is not interested in becoming a new philosopher; he is concerned with directing the actions of man.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Jacob Agus, Modern Philosophies of Judaism (New York: Behrman's Jewish Book House, 1941), p. 239.

<sup>3</sup>Diamond, op. cit., p. 20.

<sup>4</sup>Arthur Cohen, The Natural and Supernatural Jew (New York: Pantheon Books, 1962), p. 161.

For the above reason, in a study such as this in which we are concerned about Buber's influence in counseling we must be cognizant of the limitations. Cohen further contended that "A theory of relations may enjoy the distinction of enabling interpretation and analysis, but clearly Buber's use of such intense and evocative language is designed to convert man--to turn him out of the accustomed ways of beholding and using the world and to nourish in him the passion to risk himself before the world."<sup>5</sup>

Buber's work revolves around the conviction that life can only be fully experienced by appreciating the significance of the I-Thou relation. He did not, however, always conceive of this type of relational possibility in the clearest of thought patterns. Before he could fully express it, he lived it. Agus has pointed out the early convictions of the man who later developed the relation of dialogue:

Even in the earlier period of his life, the marks of this conviction can be recognized in his active career. Buber lived his philosophy long before he was able to express it. If we had attempted to learn his personal philosophy by observing his position on the various issues of the day, we should have been led to conclude that, to him, true life is a system of intimate relationships. To Buber, the central fact of life is love, the total and devoted orientation of one's will toward the needs of a fellow being. No erotic elements need enter into this attitude. It is a voluntary and conscious concentration of all one's energies and

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

interests about one object that is conceived as returning the devotion.

To be self-centered, Buber believes, is to be uprooted from reality, is to rot in cold death, even if reveling in luxury. For life is not in man, but man is in life. Foolish indeed is the man who endeavors to hoard his life and interests for the sake of the self. He loses the very thing he is striving for and is dead even when he thinks he is most alive, since life is between persons and between things, not in them.<sup>6</sup>

Agus caught the vision that was Buber's and he did not limit his understanding of the I-Thou to be a relation that excluded things or concentrated on the poles of the relation rather than the relation itself.

#### HINTS OF A LIFE OF DIALOGUE

The conviction of a life of dialogue that was to blossom into a full grown philosophy was germinating in the works of Buber almost from the day he took pen in hand. Friedman, in his comprehensive Martin Buber. The Life of Dialogue, has documented the implicit hints of dialogue and explicit statements of the I-Thou relation in the earlier works of Buber.<sup>7</sup> In a 1900 essay on Jacob Boehme, Buber expressed the feeling of unity with nature, a feeling which formed a platform in the development of his dialogical

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<sup>6</sup> Agus, op. cit., p. 239.

<sup>7</sup> Maurice Friedman, Martin Buber. The Life of Dialogue (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960), pp. 27-53.

thought.<sup>8</sup> From this expression of unity came the thought that man is himself a microcosm, a small world containing the essential essence of the wholeness that can be ours. From this it followed that each man stands in union with God. Buber declared that Boehme's dialectic found its culmination in Feuerbach's sentence, "Man with man--the unity of I and Thou--is God."<sup>9</sup> In yet another essay written in 1903, Buber said, "The most personal lies in the relation to the other. Join a being to all beings and you lure out of it its truest individuality."<sup>10</sup>

Two years later he again spoke of the "I" and the "thou." In 1908, he wrote of "The myth of I and Thou, the inspired and the inspirer: the finite who enters into the infinite, and the infinite who has need of the finite."<sup>11</sup> In 1909, Martin Buber expressed clearly his conviction that the "I" creates the "Thou." The use of the I-Thou terminology became more and more frequent in the early essays which culminated in the 1913 book Daniel, which is considered to be an important transitional work from his early mysticism to the philosophy of dialogue.

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 49.      <sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 51.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.      <sup>11</sup>Ibid.

## MAJOR INFLUENCES ON THE EARLY BUBER

Hasidism

Before discussing more fully the preliminary effort to formulate the dialogical principle in Daniel, it is helpful to take note of the major influences on the early Buber in regard to the I-Thou relation. The influence of Hasidism on Buber is well known. Buber not only drew much of his philosophy from the individualistic, Jewish mystical movement that swept through Eastern Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but he also was greatly responsible for the rebirth of Hasidism. The eager student Buber drew heavily on literature of the hasidic community, and he shared that literature in many ways, including two major works in which he collected legends and lores of the classical hasidic genera. In Tales of the Hasidism. Early Masters, and Tales of the Hasidism. Later Masters, Buber pulled together stories and anecdotes that greatly influenced him. In retelling the hasidic legends, he acknowledged that "Our sages say that it makes one wise; to me is granted a different gift: the strength to make a new beginning."<sup>12</sup>

The reader should be aware of the fact, nonetheless, that Buber was selective in his published research of

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<sup>12</sup>Martin Buber, Tales of the Hasidism. The Early Masters (New York: Schocken Books, 1947), p. xii.

Hasidism. One can receive a distorted view of Hasidism if one depends solely on Buber's impressions. It appears that he selected only that which he found consistent with his own thought. It is true that he received much from his study of the movement, but he seemed to distort it also. Consequently, although a review of Buber's interpretation of Hasidism is helpful in understanding Buber's thought, one must be critical of the way in which the Jewish scholar treated the movement.

Malcolm Diamond has stated the problem regarding Buber's selectivity as follows:

There is no doubt that Buber's reading of Hasidism is highly selective. His primary concern has been to employ the power and profundity of the best elements of the movement and not to present a balanced historical study of its development. Furthermore, no one who has read his philosophical works, especially I and Thou, can doubt that, in Buber, Hasidism has found an interpreter who is anything but passive. As its light streamed upon him he refracted it with his own peculiar intensity. He has given Hasidism a clarity and unified thrust which no movement--spread over so wide an area, over so long a period of time, and lacking all semblance of institutional discipline--could actually possess.

The omissions and more peculiar personal colorations that characterize Buber's treatment of Hasidism will doubtless be brought to our attention by other workers in the field.<sup>13</sup>

Diamond's prediction that other hasidic scholars would resist Buber proved to be correct. The following year Gershom Scholem, a reputable scholar of the hasidic movement,

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<sup>13</sup>Diamond, op. cit., p. 112.

published an essay in Commentary entitled, "Martin Buber's Hasidism: A Critique." In the article, Scholem criticized Buber's characterization of the life, doctrine, and history of the hasidic movement. Scholem indicated that Buber introduced various assumptions "that have no root in the texts--assumptions drawn from his own very modern philosophy of religious anarchism."<sup>14</sup>

Nonetheless, from his beginnings in Hasidism Buber developed a devout conviction that the immanent God can best be served by each man in his own individualistic way in the joy and exaltation over all of creation, a sensitive piety, and reverence for God and one's fellow beings. This orientation freed the youthful Jewish scholar from intellectualizing. Someone once remarked that "like these joyful dancers (hasidic community), Martin Buber is forever acrobatic enough to leap over, or squeeze behind, the weighty intellectual formula."<sup>15</sup> At any rate, Buber proved himself capable of retelling the ancient stories. In the preface to the Early Masters, one catches an idea of how Buber himself could transmit the legends:

A rabbi, whose grandfather had been a disciple of the Baal-Shem, was asked to tell a story. "A story,"

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<sup>14</sup>Gershom Scholem, "Martin Buber's Hasidism: A Critique," Commentary, XXXII:4 (October 1961), 305-16.

<sup>15</sup>Eli Burkow, "Letter to the Editor," Commentary, XXXVI:3 (February 1962), 161.

he said, "must be told in such a way that it constitutes help in itself." And he told: "My grandfather was lame. Once they asked him to tell a story about his teacher. And he related how the Holy Baal-Shem used to hop and dance while he prayed. My grandfather rose as he spoke, and he was so swept away by his story that he himself began to hop and dance to show how the master had done. From that hour on he was cured of his lameness. That's the way to tell a story!"<sup>16</sup>

Buber himself pointed out the significance of that which he gleaned from hasidic literature. He verified the use of Hasidism to illuminate his own thought, and he also verified his own subjectivity in an article in Commentary in 1963.

Since about 1910--the point in my study of Hasidism when I began to deal with basic sources (my earlier work had not been sufficiently grounded in them)--I became conscious that my task would necessarily be a selective one. Though I did not aim to be comprehensive, either historically or hermeneutically, I was even more firmly convinced that my principle of selection was not derived from a subjective preference, but rather from the same assumptions that informed my work on Judaism in general. In treating the life and teaching of Judaism, I have attempted to keep to what I believe to be its own proper truth and its decisive contribution in the past and future history of the human spirit. It goes without saying that my attitude includes an evaluation . . . that as its origin in the immovable central existence of values that in the history of the human spirit and in the uniqueness of every great religion has again and again given rise to those basic attitudes concerning the authentic way of man. Since having reached the maturity of this insight, I have not made use of a filter; I became a filter.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Buber, Tales of the Hasidim. The Early Masters, p. vi.

<sup>17</sup>Martin Buber, "Interpreting Hasidism," Commentary, XXXVI:3 (September 1963), 221.



The impact of Hasidism on the individual within the Jewish community was further clarified in a collection of essays entitled Israel and the World, in which he pointed out that his real starting point was the attitude of the faithful Jews of the earliest days:

When I refer to this popular material, it often happens that people say to me, "You mean, I take it, hasidism?" That is a question which is natural enough, only it is not primarily hasidism which I have in mind. In hasidism I see merely a concentrated movement, the concentration of all those elements which are to be even in "rabbinic" Judaism. Only, in rabbinic Judaism this movement is not visible in the structure of the community, but holds sway over the inaccessible structure of personal life. What I am trying to formulate may be called the theologoumena of a popular religion.

It is impossible to trace any one of these theologoumena back to any one epoch; my intention is to present the unity to be found in the changing forms. Religious truths are generally of a dynamic kind; they are truths which cannot be understood on the basis of a cross-section of history, but only when they are seen in the whole line of most important testimony to the truth of this conception comes from the way in which these truths clarify and fulfill themselves, and from their struggle for purity.<sup>18</sup>

In Buber it is also necessary to trace his line of development in order to fully affirm or comprehend the culmination of his thought.

### Existentialism

The impact of existentialism is discussed next in

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<sup>18</sup>Martin Buber, Israel and the World (New York: Schocken Books, 1948). pp. 13-14.

keeping with Friedman's observation.

The development of Buber's thought from his earliest essays in 1900 to the statement of his mature philosophy in 1922 (I and Thou) can best be understood as a gradual movement from an early period of mysticism through a middle period of existentialism to a final period of developing dialogical philosophy. Most of the ideas which appeared in the early periods were not really discarded in the later but were preserved in changed form. Thus, Buber's existentialism retained much of his mysticism, and his dialogical philosophy in turn included important mystical and existential elements.<sup>19</sup>

Although he stepped far beyond transcendental idealism, the young pupil Buber started with Kant in his orientation to the self-imposed orders of time and space. In Between Man and Man, we read:

When I was about fourteen years of age I myself experienced this (this uncanny feeling that any concept of space less than infinite is untenable) in a way which has deeply influenced my whole life. A necessity I could not understand swept over me: I had to try again and again to imagine the edge of space, or its edgelessness, time with a beginning and an end or a time without beginning or end, and both were equally impossible, equally hopeless--yet there seemed to be only the choice between the one or the other absurdity. Under an irresistible compulsion I reeled from one to the other, at times so closely threatened with the danger of madness that I seriously thought of avoiding it by suicide. Salvation came to the fifteen year old boy in a book, Kant's Prolegomena to All Future Metaphysics, which I dared to read although its first sentence told me that it was not intended for the use of pupils but for future teachers. This book showed me that space and time are only the forms on which my human view of what is, necessarily works itself out; that is, they were not attached to the inner nature of the world, but to the nature of my senses. It further taught that it is just as impossible to all my concepts to say that the world is infinite in space and time as to say that

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<sup>19</sup>Friedman, op. cit., p. 27.

it is finite.<sup>20</sup>

In addition to Kant, Friedman points out the influence of Wilhelm Dilthey, who illustrated the importance of personal participation in the human studies such as philosophy, social science, and psychology.<sup>21</sup> Nietzsche also served in such a way that Buber referred to him in an early essay as the "first pathfinder of the new culture," and the "awakener and creator of new life-values and new world-feelings."<sup>22</sup> Nietzsche's influence demonstrated itself in the concreteness and wholeness of life impulses and fruitfulness of conflict in Buber, as opposed to cold and detached intellectualism.

The most significant existential influence on Buber, however, was Søren Kierkegaard. Buber even took over some of Kierkegaard's terminology. In an essay entitled, "Samuel and Agag," he reflected upon his encounters with the Bible, "I do so with fear and trembling, in an inescapable tension between the word of God and the word of man."<sup>23</sup> In The Origin and Meaning of Hasidism, Buber referred to the "holy

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<sup>20</sup>Martin Buber, Between Man and Man (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955), p. 136.

<sup>21</sup>Friedman, op. cit., p. 34.      <sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>Martin Buber, "Samuel and Agag," Commentary, XXXIII:1 (January 1962), 64.

insecurity" which played such an important role in his philosophy of dialogue.

The whole systematic structure of the Kabbala is determined by the principle of a certitude that almost never stops short, almost never shudders, almost never prostrates itself. In contrast it is just in stopping short, in letting itself be disconcerted, in deep knowledge of the importance of all "information," of the incongruence of all possessed truth, in the "holy insecurity," that Hasidic peity has its true life.<sup>24</sup>

Those who know Kierkegaard will surely sense the influence of his "knight of faith" upon Buber:

The knight of faith knows . . . that it is beautiful and salutary to the individual who translates himself into the universal, who edits as it were a pure and elegant edition of himself, as free from errors as possible and which everyone can read . . . But he knows also that higher than this there winds a solitary path, narrow and steep; he knows that it is terrible to be born outside the universal, to walk without a single traveler . . . The knight of faith knows that to give up oneself for the universal inspires enthusiasm, and that it requires courage, but he also knows that security is to be found in this precisely because it is for the universal . . . The hero does the deed and finds repose in the universal, the knight of faith is kept in constant tension.<sup>25</sup>

Buber, however, went far beyond the Danish existentialist. In Between Man and Man, Buber spoke about Keirkegaard, God, and Regina in responding to the question of the "Single One:"

"In order to come to love," says Keirkegaard about

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<sup>24</sup>Martin Buber, The Origin and Meaning of Hasidism (New York, 1960), p. 179.

<sup>25</sup>Søren Keirkegaard, Fear and Trembling (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 86.

his renunciation of Regina Olsen, "I had to remove the object." That is sublimely to misunderstand God. Creation is not a hurdle on the road to God, it is the road itself. We are created along with one another and directed to a life with one another. Creatures are placed in my way so that I, their fellow creature, by means of them and with them find the way to God. A God in Whom only the parallel lines of single approaches intersect is more akin to the "God of the philosophers" than to the "God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob." God wants us to come to Him by means of the Reginas He has created and not by renunciation of them. (Underlining mine) Who is there who confesses the God Whom Keirkegaard and I confess, who could suppose in decisive insight that God wants Thou to be truly said only to Him, and to all others only an unessential and fundamentally invalid work--that God demands of us to choose between Him and His creation?

The essential is not that we should see things as standing out from God not as being absorbed in Him, but that we should "see things in God," the things themselves. To apply this to our relations with creatures: only when all relations, uncurtailed, are taken into the one relation, so we set the ring of our life's world round the sun of our being.<sup>26</sup>

Will Herberg also illuminates this intricate connection with Kierkegaard.<sup>27</sup> Buber reinforced the Dane's conviction that we need to remain a "Single One," and not be swallowed up in the "Crowd," but he parted company in refusing to limit the dialogic relationship to the self with the self, and the self with God, as does Kierkegaard. The Jewish existentialist, however, maintained that the dialogic relationship must remain triadic, the self, God, and the "other." "Real relationship with God cannot be

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<sup>26</sup>Buber, Between Man and Man, pp. 52, 54.

<sup>27</sup>Martin Buber, The Writings of Martin Buber (New York: Meridan Books, 1958), p. 16.

achieved on earth if real relationships to the world and mankind are lacking."<sup>28</sup>

With this overview, we move into Buber's transitional book between his early mysticism and existentialism to his philosophy of dialogue, Daniel.

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<sup>28</sup>Martin Buber, At the Turning (New York: Farrar, Straus and Young, 1952), p. 39.

## CHAPTER III

## ON THE THRESHOLD OF A VISION

THE ELUSIVE DANIEL

Daniel, as Friedman states, is the "first mature and comprehensive expression of Buber's philosophy, and it is at the same time the most creative and organically whole of his books to appear up till that time."<sup>1</sup> Nonetheless, as Friedman himself admits, it is a very difficult work. In an introduction which is almost half as long as the book itself, Friedman admits that the esthetical and poetic language, as well as a subjective mysticism, tend to cloud the message of the book.<sup>2</sup> One must certainly reckon with the poetic nature of Daniel, which is a bridge between the early Buber and the Buber of the intriguing "I-Thou." Due to its difficulty, more than one student has been discouraged from delving into Buber by starting with Daniel. For example, a book reviewer for Commentary became lost in his attempt to encounter the work:

Some consider Martin Buber a poet, some a philosopher, others a mystic. Almost all agree that he is an

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<sup>1</sup>Maurice Friedman, Martin Buber, The Life of Dialogue (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960), p. 35.

<sup>2</sup>Maurice Friedman, "Introduction," in Martin Buber, Daniel (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964), pp. 3-4.

unclear thinker. He never points to any means of entering into the I-Thou relationship; he simply maintains that its achievement is an instance of grace, the bliss of such unity being its own reward.

Because Buber is so obscure, each new book (or new translation) inspires the hope that finally the master will elucidate his position. Such hopes are again defeated when one reads Daniel . . . like the Biblical book of Daniel, Martin Buber's abounds in parables and riddles. All of them show that the young Buber was no less ambiguous and elusive than the older. The style itself, heavy and tedious, adds to the reader's difficulties . . . the most gifted commentator could not bring order into a work that is so diffuse in its idea.

Buber's rootlessness is especially apparent in a work like Daniel. He appears here as . . . a man of lofty ideas, a lover of beauty, but without the power to activate men and move them to change their point of view, much less their conduct.<sup>3</sup>

The criticism is raised primarily out of a lack of understanding. First of all, Buber may be elliptical and poetic, but that does not make him an unclear thinker. Although he may even be at times ambiguous, that does not make him absurd. I concede to the reviewer that Buber does not lay a floor plan for one to enter into the I-Thou relationship, but he only intended to point the way as illustrated earlier in chapter one of this study. The reader of Daniel will more than likely concede that the style is heavy and tedious. Nonetheless, a charge of rootlessness seems without basis, as a quick review of chapter two would reveal. Finally, the critic who indicates Buber has been unable to inspire men to action has failed to witness the

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<sup>3</sup>Isaac Bashevis Singer, "Rootless Mysticism," Commentary, XXXIX:1 (January 1965), 77-78.



parade of those in this century who show explicit and implicit influence by the seminal thinker. One might also point out that those who followed the personal history of the influential Hebrew writer indicate that he was able to live his "lofty ideas."

#### ANTICIPATION OF THE I-THOU PHILOSOPHY

For the careful reader, there are clues in Daniel to the later full blown philosophy of Buber. First of all, Buber clearly anticipated the I-Thou philosophy in "On Unity, Dialogue by the Sea." Flashes of insights are gifts to the reader, not roadblocks. This preliminary attempt to share his mystical experience pointed towards his concept of duality which must be overcome in action. "Thus it (unity) was recognized, known, and thought, but it was not reality for it was not lived. But unity must be able to be lived, to be realized."<sup>4</sup> "True unity cannot be found, it can only be created."<sup>5</sup> "He creates it by bringing together in himself the tension that he has taken upon him: by awakening the I of this tension."<sup>6</sup> Earlier in the dialogue, we discover the basis for these observations. Daniel is discussing the death of a man whom he loved deeply. His father

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<sup>4</sup>Buber, Daniel, p. 140.      <sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 141.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 142.

sent him to a secluded spot in the mountains in order to reckon with death. In seclusion, Daniel begins to realize the nature of his being. "Now for the first time I recognized that I was separated; now for the first time I found myself before the eternal wall."<sup>7</sup> Standing before a small, crystal clear alpine lake which reflected his own image, Daniel discovered "a two-foldness in myself: one half of me was life, the other had become death; in both I experienced not states but powers, here the command of the surging blood, there the compulsion of passing away."<sup>8</sup> Standing consequently in a duality that brought only mixture and confusion, his "soul" arose as he folded his hands, intertwined his fingers and experienced the God-powered bridge surging into his life. Finally, in a very moving passage, Buber shared his first reckoning with the dialogical unity:

Then my body was inspired and did the simple deed: my two arms raised themselves, my hands bent to each other, my fingers entwined, and over all horror there arched the God-powerful bridge. Then my body became united, the world became one for me, my sight returned to me unburdened; free and unencumbered I lay and looked at the lake, which looked at me. And in this double united gage of giving and receiving I perceived that I was no longer separated. I had torn down the eternal wall, the wall within me. From life to death--from the living to the dead flowed the deep union. I could not come to my dead, nor he to me, but we were united like the eye and the lake; because I was united in myself.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 133.      <sup>8</sup>Ibid., pp. 134-35.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 135.

# REALIZATION TO DIALOGUE

As with Daniel, this thought regarding unity came to the author. "Like the grain of seed in the earth, it laid itself on my breast and remained with me."<sup>10</sup> The grain continued to germinate in Buber, and blossomed in his central work, I and Thou. Daniel, therefore, is best characterized as a philosophy of realization on the way to becoming a philosophy of dialogue. The "realization of God through man" evolved into the "meeting of God and Man." As Rabbi Gittelson has lifted up, the transition is unclear, but the juxtaposition is clear between the two possible relations that are available to man in reference to man's experience of nature, the orienting or classifying and the realizing or making real. "What you experience, doing and suffering, creating and enjoying, you can register in the structure of your experience for the sake of your aims or you can grasp it for its own sake in its own power and splendor."<sup>11</sup> It seems that the key to the unity, creativity, and realization rests in one sentence. "In each thing, there opens to you the door of the One if you bring with you the magic that unlocks it: the perfection of your

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Roland Gittelson, "A World to Make Real," Saturday Review, XLVII:30 (July 25, 1964), 26.

direction."<sup>12</sup> Maurice Friedman lends his years of discipleship to the novice in his explanation of the two-fold nature of man posited in Daniel:

There is a two-fold relation of men to their experience: the orienting and the realizing. That which man experiences, doing and suffering, creating and enjoying, he can order in the continuity of experience for the sake of his goals or he can comprehend its power and splendour for his own sake. If man orders it, he works with it according to its forms and laws. And this ordering is not to be despised. How should we not honour the unsurveyable edifice of science and its wonderful development? But everywhere where orienting knowledge rules by itself, it takes place at the cost of the experience of reality. Realization refers to that enhanced meaning of life which springs from moments of intensified existence and intensified perception. This is what it means to realize: to relate experience to nothing else but itself. Whereas in the system of experiencing one has only to arrange and order, and living with only one part of one's being in order to withstand a single thing or event.<sup>13</sup>

No person is either a completely realizing or a completely orienting person. Nonetheless, the creative person will more often effect his power to be a realizer. On the other hand, a very basic and mature orientation is necessary in order for the person to be capable of realization.

Realized experience creates the essential form of existence; only here can what we call "things" and what we call "I" find their reality. For all experience is a dream of being bound together; orientation divides and sunders it, realization accomplishes and proclaims

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<sup>12</sup>Friedman, Martin Buber, The Life of Dialogue, pp. 35-36.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 36-37.

it. Nothing individual is real in itself, for it is only preparation: all reality is fulfilled binding. In each man there lives, utilized or suppressed, the power to become unified and to enter into reality.<sup>14</sup>

### THRESHOLD OF I-THOU

The seemingly obscure and difficult book, Daniel, therefore stands at the threshold of an unexpressed I-Thou philosophy. In facing the world, one may simply accept the "orientation" of actual experience in which all is ordered in the usual categories of time and space. Orientation is the acceptance of the individual as a different entity from that which surrounds him, and an acute awareness of his own uniqueness and the otherness of that which is outside. "Actualization," on the other hand, is a recognition and victory over the oneness that each of us experience, and the subsequent surmounting of the distinction by living in unity.

The reader might have already sensed the connection between orientation and actualization and the I-Thou philosophy which has become so universally used. Those who are totally unfamiliar with Buber or his philosophy will find this background material vital in understanding and appropriating I and Thou.

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 37.

## CHAPTER IV

BUBER'S MAGNUS OPUS--I AND THOU

In the beginning is relation.<sup>1</sup>

\* \* \*

To man the world is two fold, in accordance with his two fold attitude.

The attitude of man is two fold, in accordance with the two fold nature of the primary words which he speaks.

The primary words are not isolated words, but combined words.

The one primary word is the combination I-Thou.

The other primary word is the combination I-It; wherein, without a change in the primary word, one of the words He and She can replace It.

Hence the I of man is also two-fold.

For the I of the primary word I-Thou is a different I from that of the primary word I-It.<sup>2</sup>

\* \* \*

Primary words do not signify things, but they intimate relations.

Primary words do not describe something that might exist independently of them, but being spoken they bring about existence.

Primary words are spoken from the being.

If Thou is said, the I of the combination I-Thou is said along with it.

If It is said, the I of the combination I-It is said along with it.

The primary word I-Thou can only be spoken with the whole being.

The primary word I-It can never be spoken with the whole being.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Martin Buber, I and Thou. (New York: Charles Schribner's Sons, 1958), p. 18.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 3.    <sup>3</sup>Ibid.

The primary word I-Thou establishes the world of relation.<sup>4</sup>

\* \* \*

The spheres in which the world of relation arise are three.

First, our life with nature . . . .

Second, our life with men . . . .

Third, our life with spiritual things . . . .

In every sphere in its own way, through each process of becoming that is present to us we look out toward the fringe of the eternal Thou; in each we are aware of a breath from the eternal Thou; in each Thou we address the eternal Thou.<sup>5</sup>

\* \* \*

If I face a human being as my Thou, and say the primary word I-Thou to him, he is not a thing among things, and does not consist of things.<sup>6</sup>

\* \* \*

All real living is meeting.<sup>7</sup>

\* \* \*

The relation to Thou is direct. No system of ideas, no foreknowledge, and no fancy intervene between I and Thou.<sup>8</sup>

\* \* \*

The present, and by that is meant not the point which indicates from time to time in our thought merely the conclusion of "finished" time, the mere appearance of a termination which is fixed and held, but the real, filled present, exists only in so far as actual presentness, meeting, and relation exist. The present arises only in virtue of the fact that the Thou becomes present.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 12.

True beings are lived in the present.<sup>10</sup>

\* \* \*

Relation is mutual.<sup>11</sup>

\* \* \*

The man who straightforwardly hates is nearer to relation than the man without hate and love.<sup>12</sup>

\* \* \*

In the beginning is relation--as category of being, readiness, grasping form, mold for the soul; it is the a priori of relation, the inborn Thou.<sup>13</sup>

\* \* \*

Through the Thou a man becomes I.<sup>14</sup>

\* \* \*

The aim of relation is relation's own being, that is, contact with the Thou. For through contact with every Thou, we are stirred with a breath of the Thou, that is, of eternal life.<sup>15</sup>

\* \* \*

Every particular Thou is a glimpse to the eternal Thou.<sup>16</sup>

\* \* \*

Every real relation with a being or life in the world is exclusive. Its Thou is freed, steps forth, is single, and confronts you.<sup>17</sup>

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The most powerful and the deepest reality exists

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 13.      <sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 15.      <sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 27.      <sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 28.      <sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 63.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 75.      <sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 78.



where everything enters into the effective action, without reserve, the whole man and God, the all-embracing--the united I and the boundless Thou.<sup>18</sup>

\* \* \*

The beginning and the extinction of the world are not in me; but they are also not outside of me; they cannot be said to be at all, they are a continuous happening, connected with and dependent on me, my life, my decision, my work, and my service. But they do depend not on whether I "affirm" or "deny" the world in my soul, but on how I cause my attitude of soul to the world to grow to life, to life that acts upon the world, to real life--and in real life the ways of very different attitudes of soul may intersect.<sup>19</sup>

\* \* \*

An animal's eyes have the power to speak a great language.<sup>20</sup>

\* \* \*

Every real relation in the world is exclusive. The other breaks in on it and avenges its exclusion. Only in the relation with God are unconditioned exclusiveness and unconditioned inclusiveness one and the same, in which the whole universe is implied.<sup>21</sup>

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The eternal Thou can by its nature not become an It.<sup>22</sup>

The quotations from the poetic I and Thou demonstrate the aphoristic insight that was Buber's. I have tried to illustrate, however, that far too many have lifted less out of Buber than is actually there. Granted, we are given great freedom in our encounter. Admittedly, there is

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 89.    <sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 94.    <sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 96.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 98.    <sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 112.

no fixed doctrine or tidy system as we are accustomed in the geometrical theologians. Nonetheless, responsible scholarship must be applied. An understanding of his earlier struggles and the influences that were at work upon him are indispensable in fully understanding the culmination of his thought in I and Thou. The reader who is interested in doing more than just reading that book once or twice is referred to Malcolm Diamond's discussion of the definitive philosophy found in Buber's most famous book. As pointed out earlier, Diamond maintains that Buber can't be explained. "What Buber means by the I-Thou encounter cannot be explained, it can only be indicated."<sup>23</sup> I have shown that we must find a correlation to the words of the Jewish sage in our own experience if we are to grasp the uniqueness of the I-Thou relation. Jacob Agus has strongly maintained the necessity of looking at our own experiences to grasp Buber's.<sup>24</sup> Unfortunately, Agus, like many other reputable Buber scholars, then proceeded to elucidate the philosophic prose-poem with a multitude of abstract and geometric terms such as presentness, centrality, and exclusiveness. It is unfortunate in the least and nearly tragic at most that a

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<sup>23</sup>Malcolm Diamond, Martin Buber. Jewish Existentialist (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 23.

<sup>24</sup>Jacob Agus, Modern Philosophies of Judaism (New York: Behrman's Jewish Book House, 1968), p. 239.

majority have followed Agus' precedence in attempting to capture the essence of the Jewish existentialist with such terms.

#### PERSONAL ENCOUNTERS WITH I-THOU

Perhaps I can only convey to the reader of this paper the significance and illuminating power of the language and message of I and Thou by relating it to personal experience. My intention is to clarify Buber so that he may also serve the reader.

As a youngster, I had always been intrigued with airplanes and those who either flew them or jumped out of them. I stood many times in awe on a farmstead in South Dakota and fixed my eyes upon the nearly indistinguishable form many thousands of feet above the never ending plains. I had always dreamed of a direct encounter with one of the flying machines in order to examine it closely. When I learned that an airplane would be landing at a nearby open field, I was filled with spontaneous joy and anticipation, and eagerly awaited the day in which the aircraft would set down. I would be able to encounter the aircraft directly, and I anticipated an exciting, "Thou" experience. On the day it landed, and the subsequent visit to where it was tied down, I was bitterly disappointed. The strange configuration of metal and plastic and rubber was a let down, and

the mysterious object that floated so effortlessly above the plains was no longer mysterious or inviting, but a clattering impersonal machine. I encountered an "It," the airplane, which earlier had been a "Thou."

The Thou meets me through grace--it is not found by seeking.<sup>25</sup>

As Diamond has pointed out, one cannot plan to experience the I-Thou anymore than one can plan to fall in love.<sup>26</sup> The I-Thou relation is one that a person encounters spontaneously when grace is present. This is not to say that one should live his life without regard to his relation. Buber, as I indicated earlier, desired to point the way for us to move into more and more I-Thou relations.

Although Friedman falls error to the same mistake of Agus and others who seek to explain the I-Thou relation, I have found Friedman helpful in this respect nonetheless.

The real determinant of the primary word in which a man takes his stand is not the object which is over against him but the way in which he relates himself to that object. I-Thou is a primary word of relation. It is characterized by mutuality, directness, presentness, intensity, and ineffability. Although it is only within this relation that personality and the personal exist, the Thou of the I-Thou is not limited to men but may include animals, trees, objects of nature, and God.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>Buber, I and Thou, p. 11.

<sup>26</sup>Diamond, op. cit., p. 24.

<sup>27</sup>Maurice Friedman, Martin Buber. The Life of Dialogue (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960), p. 57.

I have encountered the Thou in many different situations, but never were the encounters planned as such. I stress that this does not eliminate responsible preparation in such a way that one opens himself to experiencing the relation of I-Thou in as many cases as possible. This is possible only by living on the "narrow ridge," a phrase Buber used to describe the paradoxical unity of that which we are so prone to see as alternatives--I and Thou, or I and It.

I have occasionally described my standpoint to my friends as the "narrow ridge." I wanted by this to express that I did not rest on the broad upland of a system that includes a series of sure statements about the absolute, but on a narrow rocky ridge between the gulfs where there is no sureness of expressible knowledge but the certainty of meeting what remains, undisclosed.<sup>28</sup>

Consequently, preparation is a way in which a man can prepare to meet the Other in an I-Thou relation. For example, in my school days at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota, I determined that I wanted to go skydiving. Many weeks of preparation were involved in learning how to exit the aircraft, how to deploy the reserve chute, how to land, and how to steer the parachute. No thought, incidently, was given to meeting the Thou in my encounter with space. I had no way of knowing how I would experience the freedom of

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<sup>28</sup>Martin Buber, Between Man and Man (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955), p. 184.

flying through space uninhibited by nothing except the pull of the earth's gravity. In that leap into space, I encountered the Thou. It was not easy to exit the security of the aircraft, nor was it easy to decide that the leap was for me.

The Thou meets me. But I step into direct relation with it. Hence the relation means being chosen and choosing, suffering and action in one.<sup>29</sup>

In that moment of freedom, literally space-walking at one hundred and twenty miles per hour, and yet sensing no motion, I was not only freed to encounter the Thou, but was freed to experience an exclusive event.

Every real relation with a being or life in the world is exclusive. Its Thou is freed, steps forth, single, and confronts you. It fills the heavens.<sup>30</sup>

The relation with the Thou need not be with a person, it can also be with nature, and it is the Thou of the space that I encountered in that moment, "moment" being something that I cannot describe by means of the conventional measurements of time and space.

The world of It is set in the context of space and time. The world of Thou is not set in the context of either of these.<sup>31</sup>

The experience cannot be measured, nor can it be recaptured. It was a moment in time which existed between

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<sup>29</sup>Buber, I and Thou, p. 11.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 78.    <sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 33.

my past and my future, and the moment of time was complete in itself in the encounter. It was present time.

It is your present; only while you have it do you have the present. The present, and by that is meant not the point which indicates from time to time in our thought, merely the conclusion of "finished" time, the mere appearance of a termination which is fixed and held, but the real, filled present, exists only in so far as actual presentness, meeting, and relation exist. The present arises only in virtue of the fact that the Thou becomes present.<sup>32</sup>

True beings are lived in the present.<sup>33</sup>

At the time of the experience, it was impossible for me to analyze what was happening to me. That would be reducing the experience to an it, which is exactly what I am now doing for purposes of illustration. I only experienced, I did not analyze.

So long as the heaven of Thou is spread out over me the winds of causality cower at my heels.<sup>34</sup>

Nor did I know what to expect, I had only to overcome that which stood between me and the experience.

The relation with the Thou is direct. No system of ideas, no foreknowledge, and no fancy intervene between I and Thou. The memory itself is transformed, as it plunges out of its isolation into the unity of the whole. No aim, no lust, and no anticipation intervene between the I and Thou. Desire itself is transformed as it plunges out of its dreams into the appearance. Every means is an obstacle. Only when every means has collapsed does the meeting come about.<sup>35</sup>

Nothing else mattered at the point of encounter.

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 12.      <sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 9.      <sup>35</sup>Ibid., pp. 11-12.

In the face of the directness of the relation everything indirect becomes irrelevant.<sup>36</sup>

The moment of the encounter was one in which I was fully realized as a person. I conclude with Agus that to fully live, one must enter fully into a relationship with the environment.<sup>37</sup>

All real living is meeting.<sup>38</sup>

Through the Thou a man becomes I.<sup>39</sup>

There is no doubt in my mind that my whole being was involved in my Thou encounter with space. Even physically, I was fully committed to what I was experiencing.

The primary word I-Thou can only be spoken with the whole being.<sup>40</sup>

My encounter with the Thou was also an encounter with the eternal Thou. The freedom that I felt and the exhilaration that I experienced was a spiritual experience for me. I felt the presence of God.

Every particular Thou is a glimpse through to the eternal Thou; by means of every particular Thou the primary word addresses the eternal Thou.<sup>41</sup>

Now, however, as I talk about the situation, the experience is no longer one of an I-Thou, but rather an I-It.

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 12.    <sup>37</sup>Agus, op. cit., p. 214.

<sup>38</sup>Buber, I and Thou, p. 11.    <sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 3.    <sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 75.



As soon as the relation has been worked out or has been permeated with a means, the Thou becomes an object among objects--perhaps chief, but still one of them, fixed in its size and its limits.<sup>42</sup>

One should not be discouraged that the Thou experience is lost. Its retention is not to be expected.

Every Thou in the world is by its nature fated to become a thing, or continually to re-enter into the condition of things. In the objective speech it would be said that every thing in the world, either before or after becoming a thing, is able to appear to an I as its Thou. But objective speech snatches only at a fringe of real life.<sup>43</sup>

This is the exalted melancholy of our fate, that every Thou in our world must become an It.<sup>44</sup>

Nor can I expect that every leap out of an airplane will again be for me an encounter with the Thou. Now I have the chance to be more objective, and can even analyze what I am experiencing. I even know, at times, what to expect, although that does not eliminate my experience of the I-Thou either.

The It is the eternal chrysalis, the Thou the eternal butterfly except that situations do not always follow one another in clear succession, but often there is a happening profoundly twofold, confusedly entangled.<sup>45</sup>

#### THE PROBLEMS OF MUTUALITY AND JUDGMENT

I have chosen as the basic illustration an example that lifts up the fact that an I-Thou relation does not

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 17.      <sup>43</sup>Ibid.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 16.      <sup>45</sup>Ibid., pp. 17-18.

have to exist only between two persons. I also wish to emphasize that it is the relation that is under consideration. As pointed out above, the poles come into being through the relation. Buber has insisted, however, that the relation is mutual. This was difficult for Buber to explain. In commenting on this supposed mutuality, Buber spoke of his relation with a tree. "Let no attempt be made to sap the strength from the meaning of the relation: relation is mutual."<sup>46</sup>

This absolute mutuality, however, presents a problem for the student of Buber. How could there have been complete mutuality between Buber and the tree or between space and me? Will Herberg goes so far as to say that referring to relations such as these as I-Thou is to basically admit that one is a mystic.<sup>47</sup> As mentioned in the first chapter, Buber himself raised the question of mutuality. "If the I-Thou relationship requires a mutual action which in fact embraces both the I and the Thou, how can the relation to something in nature be understood as such a relationship."<sup>48</sup> Buber's answer was hardly adequate, "Clearly there is no unified answer to this question."<sup>49</sup> Upon close examination,

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<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>47</sup>Will Herberg, Judaism and Modern Man (New York: Meridian Books, 1951), p. 14.

<sup>48</sup>Buber, I and Thou, p. 125. <sup>49</sup>Ibid.

one discovers that Buber was inconsistent in regarding the experience with the tree as a full-blown I-Thou relation. He denied that the tree was as conscious of him as he was of the tree. "The tree will have a consciousness, then, similar to our own? Of that I have no experience. But so you wish, though seeming to succeed in it with yourself, once again to disintegrate that which cannot be disintegrated?"<sup>50</sup> As Malcolm Diamond has stated, "What is of central significance for Buber is our ability to affirm the tree as existing just as it is, in its own right, independently of our purposes."<sup>51</sup>

Therefore, it is obvious that Buber recognized that differences do occur between the relation of man and art or nature, and the relation between man and man. Since he recognized the differences, then the critic of Buber must ask why he persisted in calling the relation mutual and did not allow for different levels of the I-Thou relation. Malcolm Diamond has pointed out that Buber did not take seriously enough the differences in the various types of the I-Thou relation.

It would seem that Buber does not weigh the differences heavily enough . . . . For as Buber readily admits, there can be no mutuality in the sense that a tree or a work of art can in any way be conscious of man! Whatever encounters Buber may have experienced, his talk of mutuality in man's relation with beings that

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<sup>50</sup>Ibid. p. 8.    <sup>51</sup>Diamond, op. cit., p. 30.

lack consciousness introduces more confusion than illumination. Our mode of apprehending any and all beings does vary radically as between the It and the Thou postures, but mutuality is not one of the factors that constitutes the difference.<sup>52</sup>

Diamond has pointed out that there is also a problem of judgment in dealing with the dialogical approach.

Buber's critics insist that, even if we accept his basic philosophical approach, his lack of an objective criterion for distinguishing between authentic and delusory I-Thou encounters prevents his forming valid judgments with regard to these great issues. They claim that his philosophy of dialogue must regard any point of view which appeals to the perspective of engagement as valid. One critic notes that since Hitler apparently experienced some form of an I-Thou encounter with the German people Buber has no criterion by which he can discriminate between this and any other instance of an I-Thou relation.<sup>53</sup>

Buber's response to these critics was emphatic, but inadequate. He indicated that there simply can be no objective criteria for distinguishing between the authentic and the delusory I-Thou experience.<sup>54</sup> Consequently, although I am convinced of its authenticity, I have no objective criteria for declaring my personal experience as an authentic I-Thou encounter. This is a problem in Buber that every reader must recognize.

My illustration may also give a false impression to the reader. I do not intend to convey that it is only in some unusual, unique, and exciting adventure such as sky-

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<sup>52</sup>Ibid., p. 31.    <sup>53</sup>Ibid., pp. 32-33.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., p. 33.

diving that one meets the Thou. Let us turn to the observations of Borowitz regarding this aspect. He points that Buber would not use the term "experience" in the same way as Otto or Schleiermacher:

Buber rejects the term "experience," in the sense of Schleiermacher and Otto, for this ultimate I-Thou relationship. He wants to make certain that we realize that knowing God is not an unusual, exceptional event characterized by tingles or tongues, overwhelming bliss or overcoming power. It may leave a residue of contentment and serenity even as it will almost certainly command the man of the encounter. Still, to measure significance by sensation is to misunderstand the I-Thou with God completely. It is as commonplace as coming from a chat with the sense that your companion is a real person, one whose depths you have been permitted to see in a way unknown to you heretofore. No gongs chimed. No birds chirped. Persons met---that is all, and everything. So it is with God. He, as most religious traditions know, is to be sought in the everyday, in the immediate, in the simple, even as the grace we are expected to say before we bite into our hamburger in some greasy diner should testify.<sup>55</sup>

With the above example of the I-Thou relation in mind, let us move on to the potential that is ours in the field of pastoral counseling in dialogue with Martin Buber.

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<sup>55</sup>Eugene Borowitz, A New Jewish Theology in the Making (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1968), p. 131.

## CHAPTER V

## LIVING IN RELATION

## THE RELATION

I have pointed out that many admirers and critics of Buber have misunderstood the I-Thou relation. The most obvious of mistakes, that of equating the I-Thou relation with persons, is easily dispelled by simply observing discussions about the I-Thou relation with nature. Other misconceptions have also been dealt with. Howard Clinebell, for example, has referred to the "counselor's ability to establish the I-Thou relationship."<sup>1</sup> Buber insisted that the I-Thou relationship could not be manufactured, or even predicted. This is not to say that the individual can do nothing. The important issue is that the individual can establish the conditions within which the I-Thou can most likely occur. First, one must strive to live in relation as discussed in this chapter. Secondly, guidelines are given in the final chapter as to how one can best establish the conditions necessary for the I-Thou relation.

Although I have shown that the I-Thou relation is experienced, and not expressed, Buber indicated that we can

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<sup>1</sup>Howard J. Clinebell, Jr., Basic Types of Pastoral Counseling (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1966), p. 296.

have knowledge about the relation. In fact, I have been sharing "knowledge about" in my description of the I-Thou experience. Knowledge about is a necessity. "Without it man cannot live."<sup>2</sup>

It is not as though scientific and aesthetic understanding were not necessary; but they are necessary to man that he may do work with precision and plunge into the truth of relation, which is above the understanding and gathers it up in itself."<sup>3</sup>

Therefore, let us plunge into Buber to discover his gifts for us. First of all, it is the relation itself that is of the utmost importance. As shown earlier, Buber declared that relation is from the very beginning. Psychotherapist Rollo May has agreed with Buber's disciple, Maurice Friedman, that not nearly enough attention has been given to the "betweenness" of the I-Thou relation.<sup>4</sup> Consequently, even as we consider the poles of the relation, we must also be aware that occasionally Buber used "Thou" to refer to the relation itself. This was particularly true when Buber referred to God as the Eternal Thou. The term "Eternal Thou" does not stand for God, but rather our relation with Him. Or when Buber refers to marriage as

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<sup>2</sup>Martin Buber, I and Thou (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), p. 34.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 41-42.

<sup>4</sup>Maurice Friedman, "Existential Psychotherapy and the Image of Man," selections included in his The Worlds of Existentialism (New York: Random House, 1964), p. 518.

being that which reveals the Thou to one another, he is again speaking of the relation. "Out of this a marriage is built up by the Thou that is neither of the I's."<sup>5</sup> Nonetheless, the poles of the relation are of utmost importance, and each pole of the relation is to be fully respected.

We are herein concerned primarily with one specific aspect of relation in one area of the I-Thou relation, that of counselor to counselee in the counseling relationship. Such a relation, like any other relation has great potential:

The relation with man is the real simile of the relation with God; in it true address receives true response; except that in God's response everything, the universe, is made manifest as language.<sup>6</sup>

Since this relation is a real simile, it will be helpful to draw upon the Buberian conception of the relation we have with God. This will be discussed in detail at the end of this chapter.

### PERSONHOOD

First and foremost, Buber emphasized that each man must strive to be a person, not an individual, but a person.

Individuality neither shares in nor obtains any reality. It differentiates itself from the other, and seeks through experiencing and using to appropriate as much of it as it can. This is its dynamic, self-differentiation and appropriation, each exercised on the It within the unreal.

There are not two kinds of man, but two poles of

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<sup>5</sup>Buber, I and Thou, p. 46.      <sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 103.



humanity. No man is pure person and no man pure individuality. None is wholly real, and none wholly unreal. Every man lives in the twofold I. But there are men so defined by persons that they may be called persons, and men so defined by individuality that they may be called individuals. True history is decided in the field between these two poles. The more a man, humanity, is mastered by individuality, the deeper does the I sink into unreality. In such times the person in man and in humanity leads a hidden subterranean and as it were cancelled existence--till it is recalled.<sup>7</sup>

Buber was quite clear in maintaining that each person is a unique, singular being. He drew upon hasidic legend to emphasize his own conviction.

The wise Rabbi Bunam once said in old age, when he had already grown blind: "I should not like to change places with our father Abraham! What good would it do God if Abraham became like blind Bunam, and blind Bunam became like Abraham? Rather than have this happen, I think I shall try to become a little more myself."

The same idea was expressed with even greater pungency by Rabbi Zusya when he said, a short while before his death: "In the world to come I shall not be asked, 'Why were you not Moses?' I shall be asked 'Why were you not Zusya?'"<sup>8</sup>

Elsewhere, in discussing the legends of the Baal-Shems, the poignant story-teller asserted that uniqueness was the essential good of man. Buber cited the wisdom of Rabbi Noah.

When Rabbi Noah, Rabbi Mordecai's son, assumed the succession after his father's death, his disciples noticed that there were a number of ways in which he conducted himself differently from his father, and asked him about this.

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., pp. 64-65.

<sup>8</sup>Martin Buber, The Way of Man. According to the Teachings of Hasidism (Chicago: Wilcox & Follet, 1951), p. 17.

"I do just as my father did," he replied. "He did not imitate, and I do not imitate."<sup>9</sup>

Secondly, we need one another in every relation that we enter. Even God needs us in our relation with Him.

You know always in your heart that you need God more than everything; but do you not know that God needs you --in the fullness of His eternity needs you? How would man be, how would you be, if God did not need him, did not need you? You need God in order to be--and God needs you, for the very meaning of your life.<sup>10</sup>

### BECOMING WHOLE

Our relation with others is crucial because it is only in relation that man becomes whole. "Man can become whole not in virtue of a relation to himself but only in virtue of a relation to another self. This other self may be just as limited and conditioned as he is; in being together the unlimited and unconditioned are experienced."<sup>11</sup>

The type of relation of which Buber spoke is as strong as death. "A great relation exists only between real persons. It can be strong as death . . . ."<sup>12</sup> In a now famous speech given by the Jewish Philosopher on the

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<sup>9</sup>Martin Buber, Tales of the Hasidim. The Later Masters (New York: Schocken Books, 1948), p. 17.

<sup>10</sup>Buber, I and Thou, p. 82.

<sup>11</sup>Martin Buber, Between Man and Man (Boston: Beacon Press 1955), p. 168.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 175.

occasion of his acceptance of the Peace Prize at the German Book Trade at Frankfurt-am-Main in 1953, Buber asserted just how real that type of relation was to him, stronger than death itself.

When I think of the German people of the days of Auschwitz and Treblinka, I behold, first of all, the great many who knew that the monstrous event was taking place and did not oppose it. But my heart, which is acquainted with the weakness of men, refuses to condemn my neighbour for not prevailing upon himself to become a martyr. Next there emerges before me the mass of those who remained ignorant of what was withheld from the German public, and who did not try to discover what reality lay behind the rumours which were circulating. When I have these men in mind, I am gripped by the thought of the anxiety, likewise well known to me, of the human creature before a truth which he fears he cannot face. But finally there appears before me, from reliable reports, some who have become as familiar to me by sight, action, and voice as if they were friends, those who refused to carry out the orders and suffered death or put themselves to death, and those who learned what was taking place and opposed it and were put to death, or those who learned what was taking place and because they could do nothing to stop it killed themselves. I see these men very near before me in that especial intimacy which binds us at times to the dead and to them alone. Reverence and love for these Germans now fills my heart.<sup>13</sup>

Such a relation is a relation in which true communion can take place. Therefore, one grants to the "man to whom he communicates himself a share of his being."<sup>14</sup> Although one cannot conceptualize this type of relation, it

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<sup>13</sup>Martin Buber, Pointing the Way (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957), p. 233.

<sup>14</sup>Jacob Trapp (ed.) Martin Buber. To Hallow This Life (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958), p. 22.

is possible. It is referred to as the sphere of the between. "I call this sphere, which is established with the existence of a man as man but which is conceptually still uncomprehended, the sphere of between: Though being realized in very different degrees, it is a primal category of human reality."<sup>15</sup> Therefore, man need not be a tool in any relation, including the counseling relation. In fact, only in such a relation as the one described above can true healing take place.

#### THE HEALING RELATION

In an essay written in 1951, "Healing through Meeting," Buber spoke of the paradox that a psychotherapist lives with. The therapist knows his theories, and he practices his skill with great care. Nonetheless, sooner or later, he realizes that something more is demanded of him, something that is incompatible with the tradition of his particular science and the theory of his school of thought. "What is demanded of him is that he . . . step forth out of the role of professional superiority . . . into the elementary situation between one who is called."<sup>16</sup> Once the psychotherapist has wrestled with this paradox, he recog-

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<sup>15</sup>Buber, Between Man and Man, p. 203.

<sup>16</sup>Buber, Pointing the Way, pp. 94-95.

nizes the great need for a genuine personal relation between the therapist and the patient.<sup>17</sup> A patient, stated the informative Jewish theologian, can never be fully healed in his isolated, self-encapsulated world. He must stand over against another being. "The encapsulation must and can be broken through, and a transformed, healed relationship must and can be opened to the person who is sick in his relations to otherness--to the world of the other which he cannot remove into his soul."<sup>18</sup> Buber concluded with a statement that could appear in every counseling text book. "A soul is never sick alone, but always a between-ness also, a situation between it and another existing being."<sup>19</sup>

The healing relation takes place between two persons. Buber's insight helps the counselor to see his patient as a person, and aids the therapist in avoiding the danger of reducing a patient to something less than a person. In the text of I and Thou, Buber commented on the peculiar relation between the counselor and the counselee.

No less illuminating example of the normative limitation of mutuality is presented to us in the relation between a genuine psychologist and his patient. If he is satisfied to "analyze" him, i.e., to bring to light unknown factors from his microcosm, and to set to some conscious work in life the energies which have been transformed by such an emergence, then he may be successful in some repair work . . . . But the real matter, the regeneration of an atrophied personal centre, will not be achieved. This can only be done by one who

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid.    <sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 97.    <sup>19</sup>Ibid.

grasps the buried latent unity of the suffering soul with the great glance of the doctor: and this can only be attained in the person-to-person attitude of a partner, not by the consideration and examination of an object.<sup>20</sup>

Whether or not this type of relation is possible between counselor and counselee has been a subject of debate. The eminent psychoanalyst, Leslie Farber, who delivered an address on "Martin Buber and Psychiatry" at a Symposium on the Interrelationship Between Religion and Psychiatry in Washington, D.C., recognizes that the therapeutic moments of healing can take place wherever the mutual encounter between two beings, as described by Buber, takes place. Without such meeting, claims Farber, no healing will take place. Despite the inequalities in position, status, background, and awareness, Farber continues, the therapeutic encounter or meeting is possible only if the therapist addresses his patient as a human being, and not as the "object of knowledge."<sup>21</sup> We must be free enough, concludes Farber, to meet as one human being to another human being which conveys a realness to the other being's existence. "Out of meeting may come the arduous, painful examination which some of us call 'working through.'"<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>Buber, I and Thou, pp. 132-33.

<sup>21</sup>Leslie Farber, "What Is Effective in the Therapeutic Process," Pastoral Psychology, VII:69 (December 1956), 47.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 48.

In a most informative dialogue between Martin Buber and Carl Rogers in 1957, moderated by Maurice Friedman, Rogers asked how it was possible for Buber to live so deeply in interpersonal relations with such an indepth understanding of the human being. After reflecting briefly on his limited exposure to psychotherapy, Buber responded:

It was just a certain inclination to meet people. And as far as possible, to, just change if possible something in the other, but also to let me be changed by him. . . . I felt I had not the right to want to change another if I am not open to be changed by him as far as it is legitimate . . . I cannot be so to speak above him and say, "No! I'm out of the play. You are mad."<sup>23</sup>

The difficulty in the complete mutuality of the situation is shown by observing what Buber said in this conversation with Rogers and with what he wrote in the "Postscript" to I and Thou. In the "Postscript," Buber insisted that mutuality is present in that healing takes place only in the person-to-person attitude of a partner.<sup>24</sup> As I have illustrated earlier, Buber always insisted on mutuality in the I-Thou relation. Nonetheless, he set forth what seemed to be an exception in this case. "Healing . . . is only possible to the one who lives over against the other, and yet is detached"<sup>25</sup> Buber expressed himself in the "Postscript:"

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<sup>23</sup>"Dialogue Between Martin Buber and Carl Rogers," in Friedman, The Worlds of Existentialism, p. 486.

<sup>24</sup>Buber, I and Thou, p. 132. <sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 133

The most emphatic example of normative limitation of mutuality could be provided by the pastor with a cure of souls, for in this instance an "inclusion" coming from the other side would attack the sacral authenticity of the commission.

Every I-Thou relationship, with a relation which is specified as a purposive working of one part upon the other, persists in virtue of a mutuality which is forbidden to be full.<sup>26</sup>

One must emphasize that the mutuality between the counselor and the counselee is limited only in regard to inclusion. Mutuality must exist in terms of always allowing the counselee to be a person and not an object to be manipulated. Total inclusion, however, is not possible. Inclusion refers to the counselee's being able to take the part of the counselor. Buber likened this aspect to the teacher-pupil relation.

But however intense the mutuality of giving and taking with which he (teacher) is bound to his pupil, inclusion cannot be mutual in this case. He experiences the pupil's being educated, but the pupil cannot experience the educating of the educator. The educator stands at both ends of the common situation, the pupil only at one end.<sup>27</sup>

#### DIALOGUE WITH GOD

When the counselor strives for an openness that enables the I-Thou relation, he is able to get in touch with another being. I say "enable," because I have already

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., pp. 133-34.

<sup>27</sup>Buber, Between Man and Man, p. 100.



pointed out that to manufacture the relation is impossible. As we strive to be a person to the one in need, we can draw insights from Buber's conception of the personhood of God. Although we cannot totally understand God, we know that he is at least a person, or as Buber has said, the Absolute Person. "As a Person God gives personal life, he makes us as persons become capable of meeting with him and with one another."<sup>28</sup> This encounter with God is out of our ordinary, everyday living:

God's speech to men penetrates what happens in the life of each of us, and all that happens in the world around us, biographical and historical, and makes it for you and me into instruction, message, demand. Happening upon happening, situation upon situation, are enabled and empowered by the personal speech of God to demand of the human person that he take his stand and make the decision. Often enough we think there is nothing to hear, but long before we have ourselves put wax in our ears.<sup>29</sup>

In order to fully stand in relation to God, we must hear his word, and live in dialogue with Him. I have indicated that this relation with God means a recognition of the Eternal Thou. Buber indicated that God is a partner in the human life in dialogue. His encounter with God was an encounter which took place in everyday life. We suffer the "eclipse of God" only if we do not enter into dialogue with God, and for this reason, as alluded to earlier, God "needs" us to communicate his Word to the world. Only in the full-

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<sup>28</sup>Buber, I and Thou, p. 136.    <sup>29</sup>Ibid., pp. 136-37.

ness of life and in the midst of an encounter with the world do we come in contact with the existing God. We experience the "death of God," only if we fall out of dialogue with him, a dialogue which must be an I-Thou dialogue. Buber asserted forcefully in all his work that we can relate to God only on the I-Thou basis. In speaking of relating to God in his book, Eclipse of God, the Jewish theologian clarified his position:

If philosophy is here set in contrast to religion, what is meant by religion is not the massive fulness of statements, concepts, and activities that one customarily describes by God. Religion is essentially the act of holding fast to God. And that does not mean holding fast to the faith in God that one has conceived. It means holding fast to the existing God. The earth would not hold fast to its conception of the sun (if it had one) nor to its connection with it, but to the sun itself.<sup>30</sup>

#### THE PROBLEM OF BUBER'S GOD

Although Buber's experience of God was insightful, it may also be construed as an anthropomorphic image of God. In one sense, man seems to be controlling God in the works of Buber. Man seemingly has the power to seal God out of the world. God's revelation and redemption come only in response to man. Arthur A. Cohen has commented on the "danger" of an anthropomorphic view of God. Cohen indicated

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<sup>30</sup> Martin Buber, Eclipse of God (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957), p. 123.

that the inherent danger of such a view of God is making God a respondent of man. Even though Buber insisted that God acts and reveals, it was always in response to man. "Where is the initiative of God before which man--sullen and unbowed--must yield?"<sup>31</sup>

Some critics have stated, therefore, that Buber's view of God is inadequate. Jacob Agus, for example, feels that without some objective criterion, man really doesn't know what God wills him to do. In fact, how does man know if he is addressing either the "Eternal Thou" or some form of "demonic Thou?"<sup>32</sup> The problem is that there is no rational element by which we can judge the validity of the encounter with God. Agus reports that this type of philosophy is "not without dangers of its own:"

Those, who, like Buber, have felt the inner voice of God commanding them what to do and what not to do are, of course, beyond the reach of argument. True, their knowledge is not of the same order of certainty as mathematical truth. Yet, they are convinced that their orders are from God, and God will do no wrong. Those of us, however, who are constrained to judge the value of these "inner calls" by external standards, may well feel uneasy at the total absence of the rational element in the decision advocated by Buber. If only we were certain that the call came from God!<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>Arthur Cohen, The Natural and Supernatural Jew (New York: Pantheon Books, 1962), p. 169.

<sup>32</sup>Jacob Agus, Modern Philosophies of Judaism (New York: Behrman's Jewish Book House, 1941), p. 276.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

Agus goes on to point out that irrational devotion to God is even a greater danger to mankind than out and out selfishness. Agus comments on the conviction that devotion to all things is ultimately devotion to God if the Eternal Thou meets us in the I-Thou relation. Agus insists that in this manner, it is only the will of God that is revealed, not God Himself. Consequently, God Himself cannot serve to guide our devotion to Him.<sup>34</sup>

In light of the above observations, the student of Buber should realize the limitations involved in the Jewish scholar's view of God. The fact that he has no specific doctrine of the nature of God has even led one critic to feel that Buber's philosophy of life is left rudderless and adrift.<sup>35</sup> Although I'm confident that most Buber scholars would feel this claim to be an overstatement, it is important to realize that Buber's view of God may not be sufficient to lead all of mankind.

#### CONNECTING WITH OTHERS

Each of us must be real persons if we expect to connect with the other. Tillich, for example, reveals his intricate influence by Buber when he states, "Acceptance by something which is less than personal could never overcome

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 277.    <sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 279.

personal self-rejection."<sup>36</sup> This is simply allowing ourselves to operate as persons in relation, rather than individuals. It is as persons that we respond to other beings. Response is crucial, and serves as the basis of every relation. "The man who straightforwardly hates is nearer to (an I-Thou) relation than the man without hate and love."<sup>37</sup> This statement of Buber emphasizes the importance of response as the basis of every relation, be it I-It or I-Thou. Buber emphasized that to hate is to be in touch with only a part of another in an I-It relation. "Only a part of a being can be hated."<sup>38</sup> Consequently, even though the response is limited, the man who hates is closer to an I-Thou relation than the man who does not respond at all.

Buber felt that most of us are operating as individuals. "Real listening has become rare in our time."<sup>39</sup> The much needed authentic personal existence is a result of the spoken or silent listening between the I and the Thou. Maurice Friedman has confirmed this in relation to counseling in a reply to Leslie Farber's address, "Martin Buber and Psychiatry."

Though we are born 'individuals,' in the sense of

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<sup>36</sup>Paul Tillich, "The Courage to Be," selections included in Friedman, The Worlds of Existentialism, p. 348.

<sup>37</sup>Buber, I and Thou, p. 16.      <sup>38</sup>Ibid.

<sup>39</sup>Buber, Eclipse of God, p. 4.

being different from others, we are not born persons. Our personalities are called into being by those who enter into relation with us. To become a person means to become someone who responds to what happens from a center of inwardness. Though I-Thou is a word of relation and togetherness, each of the members of the relation remains himself, and that means totally different from the other.<sup>40</sup>

By living in relation with everything as directed by Martin Buber, each of us is capable of realizing one's own unique personhood. Buber's guidelines give us a much greater insight into what many pastoral counselors try to convey to the student. For this observation, I now turn to the conclusion of the paper.

## CHAPTER VI

## "YOU YOURSELF MUST BEGIN"

In chapter five, I pointed out the various aspects of living in relation. If one lives in communion with the world and with other individuals, one enables the I-Thou relation to take place. Living in relation was described as the way in which one becomes whole. Everyone is a unique, singular person. We should neither manipulate another nor fail to respond to another. In this chapter I will open by reflecting on how Buber can be informative for the student of pastoral counseling, and then refer to the insights of two pastoral counselors, Reuel Howe and Frank Kimper, who have drawn heavily upon Buber in the formulation of their theology of counseling. I will also offer personal observations of some techniques that allow for the I-Thou relation to take place. It is my hope that the illustrations and examples will offer guidelines to the reader who is interested in turning to Buber for assistance in understanding the nature of relations and who is also interested in enabling the I-Thou relation to take place.

## ILLUMINATION OF THE WORK OF PASTORAL THEOLOGIANS

Buber's observations of the nature of relations can be very helpful to the pastoral counseling student, for

Buber can serve as an underlying force in one's "care of souls." Reuel Howe has lifted up this aspect. Recognizing the danger of distorting the person, Howe draws upon Buber to assert that any other role than that of person to person is less than adequate. "As we bring to his (Buber's) guidance our respective experiences, interpretations and disciplines, he will help us to communicate with each other and to learn to serve the people of our times in a complimentary way."<sup>1</sup> The student of pastoral counseling may be perplexed in attempting to minister in the way that the educators seem to indicate is possible. Many insights are clarified by an understanding of Buber. One might have questioned, for example, how it is possible to enter into a relationship as described by Carl Rogers:

To enter deeply with this man into his confused struggle for self-hood is perhaps the best implementation we know for indicating the meaning of our basic hypothesis that the individual represents a process which is deeply worthy of respect, both as he is and with regard to his potentialities.<sup>2</sup>

Or, one might have wondered in his study of Howard Clinebell's Basic Types about the force behind a relationship described as a new psychological entity which includes more

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<sup>1</sup>Reuel Howe, "Discussion on 'Martin Buber and Psychotherapy,'" Pastoral Psychology, VII:69 (December 1956), 49.

<sup>2</sup>Carl Rogers, Client-Centered Therapy (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1951), p. 45.



that the individual needs, problems, personality, expectations and hopes. "The 'more' is their interaction--what each becomes in the process of responding to what the other becomes in the process of responding to him."<sup>3</sup>

The Miracle of Dialogue does indeed become a miracle as we learn from Buber as Reuel Howe did. We are better able to understand what the "meeting" is all about, for Howe relied heavily on Buber.<sup>4</sup> Genuine dialogue, the miracle to which Howe refers, takes place only when each of the partners in dialogue seriously considers the other in its "present and particular being."<sup>5</sup> This element is experiencing the other side. This experience is not to be confused with what has become the password in counseling, "empathy." Empathy, says Howe, means to transport oneself into the dynamic structure of an object, and therefore effect "the exclusion of one's own concreteness, the extinguishing of the actual situation in life, and absorption in pure aestheticism of the reality in which one participates."<sup>6</sup>

Clinebell's insistence that a great deal of coun-

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<sup>3</sup>Howard J. Clinebell, Jr., Basic Types of Pastoral Counseling (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1966), p. 100.

<sup>4</sup>Reuel Howe, The Miracle of Dialogue (New York: Seabury Press, 1965), pp. 122-52.

<sup>5</sup>Howe, "Discussion on 'Martin Buber . . .,'" p. 52.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

seling must be done in a relational matrix becomes more clear when informed by Buber. "A soul is never sick alone, but always through a betweenness, a situation between it and another existing being."<sup>7</sup>

As a serious student of Buber, one is better equipped to receive the power of which Lewis Sherrill speaks

It can be said that man, as a being, participates in Being-Itself, which is God. Therefore to the extent that a man truly knows himself, he truly knows God, although he is not identical with God, and does not know all there is of God.<sup>8</sup>

Sherrill is further clarified if we understand Buber upon whom Sherrill himself draws. "In two-way communication at its best no person is an object to another person. No person is to be manipulated by another person."<sup>9</sup>

Bonhoeffer, in Communion of Saints, states, "The Thou of the other man is also the way to the divine Thou, a way of recognition or rejection. In the 'moment' the individual again and again becomes a person through the 'other.'"<sup>10</sup> The examples cited above illustrate the variety of works which are clarified by an in depth understanding of

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 53.

<sup>8</sup>Lewis Sherrill, The Gift of Power (New York: Macmillan, 1955), p. 16.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 121.

<sup>10</sup>Dietrich Bonhoeffer, The Communion of Saints (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), p. 36.

Buber.

#### BASIS FOR PASTORAL COUNSELING--KIMPER AND HOWE

In a personal interview, Dr. Frank Kimper, professor of pastoral counseling at the School of Theology, Claremont, California, indicated to me that Buber had served as the basis for his counseling ministry.<sup>11</sup> Dr. Kimper related to me that he had "emerged" out of the theology of Martin Buber. Kimper's understanding of Buber blossomed into a philosophy of counseling. Although he used familiar Buberian terms during the interview, I was really hearing Frank Kimper, who had appropriated into his own personhood that which Buber had to offer. By meeting, Kimper indicated that he meant becoming aware of, and being in contact with, the beingness of being--the essential nature of being, all of nature--the rockness of a rock, the treeness of a tree. That made all of life sacred, he continued, and all experiences holy because in the meeting of two entities--in the I-Thou experience--one meets God and knows it. One will simply know he has been in touch with the essential nature of the universe, the cosmic feeling. Kimper indicated that the I-It mode of relating is just as important because that's the practical aspect, and without it, there would be little possibility

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<sup>11</sup> Frank Kimper, personal interview, School of Theology, Claremont, California, May 9, 1972.

to meet anyone. One must bear in mind that an I-You relation can take place as an I-Thou or I-It experience, depending on the nature of the relation. One meets another first in the I-It relation. Furthermore, Kimper felt that if another did not sense his beingness, it would be dehumanizing. One is truly met in the I-Thou context, which is not a change of the I-It, but an addition to it. He also affirmed that one can only experience that I-Thou. One cannot verbalize it, and herein lies the problem of explanation. For Kimper, the relation of dialogue is also one which we can use to strategize for the whole ecological thrust of our day in seeing the land, minerals, and all resources in their depth dimension. All sensitive responses to resources by human beings is indicative of the appreciation of their beingness. Finally, Dr. Kimper stated that the I-It relation is helpful, and the I-Thou relation will last beyond the moment that it is experienced. "If I'm in touch with the youness of you," he concluded, "the effect will linger."<sup>12</sup> Kimper's discussion of Buber indicated that he had a thorough understanding of the I-Thou relation, and that understanding was a major contribution to his theological basis for pastoral counseling.

Reuel Howe has also indicated that the pastoral

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

counselor is helped by reading Buber. Howe mentioned several points in an article in Pastoral Psychology.<sup>13</sup> First of all, he indicated that Buber's lack of dogmatic religion gives every person the freedom to experience God, since God is revealed through that person's experience. Bearing in mind the danger of manufacturing God, the counselor is able to help the counselee see where God is active in life. Howe indicated that Buber had shown him that true religion has little emphasis on dogma and great emphasis on relation with God and with one another. The counselor must avoid being a moralist and avoid judging the counselee. If the pastor stands over against the counselee as judge, there appears to be little chance of "meeting" each other. This does not deny, however, the use of whatever tools the counselor might have which he can utilize to assist in the "meeting" between the two people involved. Since Buber has emphasized that a person is not sick alone, work on the relation is more important than judging the behavior.

Howe also appreciated the perspective of Buber in regard to the counselor's professional task.

Buber helps the therapist to see in what relation his patient stands that changes him from a patient to a person, and in what relation the therapist stands that changes his fundamental identity from that of a doctor to a person. The functions of patient and doctor are

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<sup>13</sup> Howe, "Discussion on 'Martin Buber . . .,'" p. 49

subordinate to the relation as persons.<sup>14</sup>

#### GUIDELINES FOR ENABLING THE I-THOU RELATION

I have found that various aspects of Buber's insights have been particularly helpful to me in relating to people. I feel that a number of guidelines will be useful to the reader who is interested in allowing for the occurrence of the I-Thou relation. I have discovered through Buber that presence and response are first and foremost. Relation may often mean "being there," just as God is with us in every situation. Buber has indicated that our relation with God gives us clues to the meaning and significance of other relations. Recognizing the faithful presence of God offers us a major guideline for living in relation since we, too, must strive to be present.

Buber's translation of YHVH was insightful and helpful to me in regard to the importance of presence.

The elemental word, that had an entirely oral character and needed the completion by an appropriate gesture, has now the meaning of a verb: YHVH, that is to say He Who will be there, He Who will be present, this is the deity's name. What happens here is the rationalization of the irrational exclamation. Moses does not introduce into the history of Israel's faith a new divine name, just as he does not introduce a new deity; the deity becomes more intelligible, the name more explicable. The God Himself solves the riddle of this name of His by transposing it into the first person: Ehyeh ("I will be there"). But He adds something more:

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

asher ehveh ("as I will be there"), that is to say, in whatever appearance I will be there.<sup>15</sup>

The encounter with God is a meeting. He is to be met, and He is everywhere. If we are estranged from him, Buber has informed us that it is not because God is absent.<sup>16</sup> So also must we seek to establish a unity with everyone and everything in the world. In one of his books, Buber shared his comments on one "united doer," Jesus:

This is the man, the man of all times and of all places, the man of the here and now, who perfects himself into the I of the world. This is the man who, embracing the world, does not become manifold in its manifoldness; but rather, out of the strength of his world embracing, has himself become unified, a united doer.<sup>17</sup>

In sharing his impressions of Buber's understanding of presence, Borowitz writes, "Two people always meet as three, for God is with them, making them as persons, and their meeting possible."<sup>18</sup> The importance of the ministry of presence in the counseling relation is also affirmed by Borowitz:

Buber knows he cannot convey the reality of the

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<sup>15</sup>Martin Buber, The Prophetic Faith (New York: Macmillan, 1949), p. 28.

<sup>16</sup>Jacob Trapp (ed.) Martin Buber, To Hallow This Life (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957), p. 2.

<sup>17</sup>Martin Buber, Pointing the Way (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957), p. 18.

<sup>18</sup>Eugene Borowitz, A New Jewish Theology in the Making (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1968), p. 131.

I-Thou in I-It terms. He has, rather, written his lover's diary of the human situation; and you and I reading it may, if we are graced, experience through his writings what we have actually lived in our lives. For the same reason, writings about Buber are less effective than making friends with people--an observation that clarifies why the preacher's person is more important than any week's sermon, why his visit was deeply meaningful, though we cannot recall what he said or did.<sup>19</sup>

This demonstrated the need for the pastor to call upon his parishioners when they are ill or have shown some other need. One must also bear in mind, however, that response grows out of presence. If the pastor is interested in allowing for the conditions that will most likely result in an I-Thou relation, the call should be more than a social visit. The above observation by Borowitz highlights presence. With the aid of some of Buber's insight, I would like to expand the presence of the pastor to include the type of conversation that might enable the I-Thou relation to take place.

The column on the right demonstrates the area of conversation which has a better chance of resulting in an I-Thou relation. The focus is on both the person of the counselor and the person of the counselee. The emphasis is on mutual sharing and being with the person in his life situation. The setting is the present and the matrix of relations is under consideration.

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., pp. 133-34.



A social call concentrates on:

1. External subjects, e.g., weather, sports, world events, local events, the moon, volleyball

2. Maintaining a congenial atmosphere

3. Comfort through avoiding the tension areas

4. Sharing stories, e.g., experiences and mutual trading

5. Being pleasant, expressing positive opinions

6. What should be, but making definite plans

7. Generalizing, universalizing. What they say, what they feel, or what they think

8. Being helpful by entertaining or just hanging around

9. Talking about religion in general, e.g., differences between churches or services or ministers

10. People in general

An "enabling" call concentrates on:

1. The person

2. Accepting tension areas in both the caller and the callee

3. Comfort through facing all aspects of life together

4. Helping the person to share himself and also sharing oneself

5. Being understanding

6. A look at what is, as a step to what should be

7. Being specific--what you do, think, feel, and what I do, think, feel

8. Being helpful by intimate sharing

9. God-and-me, your relationship to him

10. Significant relationships of the person and the caller

In addition to the above guidelines, there are a number of practical applications of the Buber approach to dialogue that have been illuminated in my work with Frank Kimper at the Pastoral Counseling Center in Claremont. The following insights shared by Dr. Kimper were given in lecture form at the School of Theology or in consultation with him regarding actual counseling cases.<sup>20</sup> First of all, although the counselor is recognized as the "helper," this does not mean that he should manipulate the counselee. Since relation is primarily mutual according to Buber, the counselor should concentrate on working with another person, not particularly for him. Efforts should be made, therefore, to work together in enabling the counselee to realize his own potential in becoming more responsible in his world of relations. To become more responsible, as Kimper has indicated, is to be able to both express caring and to receive caring. This is to be demonstrated by behavior in which a person is able to maintain his own integrity as an autonomous and unique individual. In addition, the person must respect the integrity of others. To express caring is to recognize the infinitely worthfulness of the other person. To receive caring, on the other hand, is to be able to

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<sup>20</sup>Frank Kimper, Advanced Supervised Pastoral Counseling (AM 342), School of Theology, Claremont, Ca., Fall Semester, 1972.

affirm one's own worthfulness as a person. The primary manifestation of caring is for the person himself, not for his body, mind, talents, behavior, or attitudes. Kimper has enumerated some of the ways in which caring for the person is expressed. These are all ways in which one can enable the I-Thou relation to take place.<sup>21</sup>

1. Non-verbal giving and receiving appreciation, esteem, and affection.
2. Listening to what the other has to say, checking for accuracy of hearing, and giving it thoughtful consideration.
3. Sharing openly and honestly one's own opinions, impressions and feelings as an equal, recognizing that they are only expressions of a finite being.
4. Examining together alternative ways of perceiving and responding in life situations--to increase satisfaction in living through more responsible relating, and more productive use of time, energy and personal equipment.
5. Facing together the realities of finite existence, and agreeing to accept limitations gracefully.
6. Covenanting with each other to experiment with the best possible alternatives and to evaluate the experience and try again to keep growing.
7. Trusting the "inner resources" of the human being which include the Holy Spirit. There is available all the resources necessary for responsible living.

My experience as a small group leader or member has also been illuminated by reading Martin Buber. The pastoral counselor has many opportunities to organize small growth

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<sup>21</sup>Frank Kimper, "Aspects of a 'Helping' Relationship" (Claremont, Ca., 1970), p. 2.

groups. I would like to share with the reader some of the experiences that I have had over the past two years that have demonstrated that the theology of Martin Buber can be informative to the pastoral counselor in small group work.

In one class of which I was a member, the instructor, Dr. Howard Clinebell, gave each of the members a "gift." We were invited to make a very small hole in a piece of paper and then go outside and silently observe something in detail.<sup>22</sup> It was amazing that a number of us were able to get so connected with the beingness of so many different subjects. We were able to relate to trees, bugs, flowers, mountains, clouds, and other people. Many expressed the fact that they were in touch with the "soul" of that which they observed, and others spoke of being in contact with God through the contact they made with the various objects. In Buber's terms, I-Thou relations were experienced, and the Eternal Thou was met in the Thous that were experienced.

In another Clinebell group, we were invited to mill around with our eyes closed in order to get in contact with the people in the group. With hands extended, we experi-

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<sup>22</sup>Howard J. Clinebell, Jr., Group Counseling (AM 241), School of Theology, Claremont, Ca., Fall Semester, 1971.

experienced one another in silence.<sup>23</sup> After this interesting experience, one person remarked that she felt she was touching God as she met other hands. The Eternal Thou was coming through to her in the I-Thou relation with others in the group. We experience God, Buber has said, in communion with others.

The use of diads and triads has also demonstrated that Buber is correct in asserting that real listening is rare in our day. Individuals in a large group break down into smaller groups of two or three and then practice listening to the other person or persons in the group. In one twelve week session with teenagers, this technique was employed during the first session. The group was unanimous in desiring this kind of interaction at every subsequent meeting. They were amazed at how good it felt to be "really" heard by another person. One youngster declared that he must not have been listening to anyone for the past several years. They all reported that it was extremely satisfying to hear and to listen. Just as Buber has indicated, true life is experienced only within a system of intimate relationships in which each person is heard. Also, dialogue in small groups is important because life itself is

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<sup>23</sup>Howard J. Clinebell, Jr., Marriage and Family Counseling (AM 246), School of Theology, Claremont, Ca., Fall Semester, 1972.

experienced between persons.

Although I am confident the examples given in this paper have been illuminating, it is not my intention to outline a number of techniques for the reader to try. I am hopeful, however, that the reader of this paper will allow himself to experience Buber, and then reflect on his own counseling, small group leadership, or interaction with people and nature. Such a reflection, I feel, will assist the reader who desires to enable the I-Thou relation.

#### BEGINNING WITH ONESELF

Just as the reader must formulate his own theology of relation, entering into the beingness of others is a process that must necessarily begin with our own self, a position taken by Buber in many of his reflections on the nature of the self. Writing on the "Silent Question" that comes out of the depths of stillness as we seek a "silent" God, the Jewish theologian felt that God speaks to each individual in his own existence. God addresses each of us, not as a collective "You," but as a single "Thou." "Only in the degree to which the individual, in the course of historic reality, discovers himself and becomes aware of himself will God speak to him as such."<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Martin Buber, At the Turning (New York: Farrar, Straus and Young, 1952), pp. 37-38.

In Between Man and Man, the necessity of starting with the self is especially clear:

He can know the wholeness of the person and through it the wholeness of man only when he does not leave his subjectivity out and does not remain an untouched observer. He must enter, completely and in reality, into the act of self-reflection, in order to become aware of human wholeness. In other words, he must carry out this act of entry into that unique dimension as an act of his life . . . he must expose himself to all that can meet you when you are really living.<sup>25</sup>

Only by beginning with oneself will one be able to live in relation in both his personal and professional life. Buber's disciple, Maurice Friedman, reflects the influence of his teacher in the Problematic Rebel in which he recognizes the uneasiness which a person feels as he steps forward between his personal and professional self as a psychotherapist or minister. Personal confirmation comes only in realizing that one must receive confirmation in both his personal life and his professional life, and that requires reflections on the self as involved in both areas.

The person does not exist as a self-evident, self-sufficient reality any more than he can be subsumed under his social role or group category. The person in the modern world exists as pure paradox: responding with a calling of which he is never sure to a call which he can never clearly hear . . . every man must risk himself to establish himself as the person that he is and

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<sup>25</sup> Martin Buber, Between Man and Man (Boston: Beacon press, 1955), p. 124.

risk failure in so doing.<sup>26</sup>

The study of Buber offers me great hope for the future. I have referred to the Jewish sage as being "prophetic," and I am convinced that his word for us is just that. Buber gave us a clue to fulfillment. Although he scoffed at the title "prophet," he was indeed a pioneer and bridge builder in the field of relation. When told he was a prophet, Buber replied, "How do I know what will be in the future? I am interested in the present."<sup>27</sup> Therein lies his philosophy, and therein lies the hope for the future. We must turn to the present. It was his hope that we become aware of all beingness around and within us, for without awareness nothing can be accomplished in the present for the future. Those who become aware will think and feel, and will then be equipped to talk and write and act in such a way that each person is allowed personhood, and each being is allowed beingness. If we use our personhood in the way it was meant in the cause of human growth and integrity, then we will move toward personhood and beingness.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>Maurice Friedman, "Problematic Rebel," selections included in his The Worlds of Existentialism (New York: Random House, 1964), pp. 168-70.

<sup>27</sup>Frank Kappler, "Wise Old Teacher of I-Thou," Life, LVIII:25 (June 25, 1965), 97.

<sup>28</sup>Norman Cousins, "Talk, Write, Act," Saturday Review, XL:12 (March 23, 1957), 20.



My word for you in parting is Buber's word for us:

This is the message: You yourself must begin.  
Existence will remain meaningless to you if you yourself do not penetrate into it with active love and if you do not in this way discover its meaning for yourself. Meet the world with the fullness of your being, and you shall meet God. If you wish to believe, love.<sup>29</sup>

And if not now, when?<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>Buber, At the Turning, p. 44.

<sup>30</sup>Martin Buber, Israel and the World (New York: Schocken Books, 1948), p. 239.

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